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NEWS AND MEDIA
RESEARCH CENTRE

DIGITAL NEWS REPORT: AUSTRALIA 2023

WOMEN AND NEWS SPECIAL REPORT:
GENDER GAPS IN NEWS
CONSUMPTION AND
ENGAGEMENT



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HOW AUSTRALIAN WOMEN ENGAGE WITH NEWS: GENDER GAPS IN NEWS CONSUMPTION

'Women and news special report: Gender gaps in news consumption and engagement' is a special issue of the *Digital News Report: Australia*. *Digital News Report (DNR): Australia* is an annual report published by the News and Media Research Centre at the University of Canberra. The N&MRC is the Australian partner institute of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford.

NEWS & MEDIA RESEARCH CENTRE

The N&MRC advances public understanding of the changing media environment. N&MRC is Australia's nationally recognised research centre for the study of news media industries, audiences and public discourse. Established in 2013 and positioned in the nation's capital, the N&MRC is a national research hub with wide and deep connections across disciplines, industries, academic and public institutions.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This special issue of the *Digital News Report: Australia 2023* focuses on gender differences in consumption, perceptions of and engagement with news as well as views on key news topics, such as climate change and reporting on gender issues.

Data from nine previous issues of the *Digital News Report: Australia 2015-2023* consistently show a gender gap in news consumption and attitudes towards news. In this special issue we conducted a comprehensive analysis of these gender differences in a global context.

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN ARE LESS INTERESTED IN AND ENGAGED WITH NEWS

The data show that Australian women consume news less frequently than men and are less likely to say they are interested in news. The gender gap in news interest in Australia is the widest in the world.

This reflects stark differences in preferences for and attitudes towards news between men and women. Only one in five women (22%) are interested in politics compared to almost half of men (49%). One in four women (23%) say they 'don't know' their political orientation. Women are also less trusting of mainstream news (F 39%; M 48%).

Women's apathy towards mainstream news and politics is reflected in their lack of engagement with news. Women are less likely than men to read comments on news websites, share stories on social media, vote in an online poll, like or rate a news story, or comment on an online news story. Furthermore, they are also less likely to engage in political discussions online (F 56%; M 71%) and to pay for digital news (F 13%; M 32%).

As well as expressing lower interest in news, women are also more likely to be actively avoiding it. News avoidance is high in Australia compared to other countries, but it is particularly high among Australian women (F 72%; M 67%). Women tend to avoid certain types of news such as sports and political news more than men, but they are less likely to avoid news about their local community, culture, lifestyle, climate change and social justice issues. Women are more likely to say they avoid news because it has a negative effect on their mood.

WOMEN ARE TURNING TO SOCIAL MEDIA FOR NEWS

These gaps in news consumption suggest that mainstream news may not be providing what women want. The reasons women are turning away from news may be a lack of relevance and poor representation of issues women care about. In this context, it appears Australian women are turning away from traditional platforms and towards social media.

The data show that among women who consume news, half use social media as a source for news. This is higher for younger women; 59% of Gen Z women in Australia use social media to get news, and this is 12 percentage points higher than the global average for this cohort (47%). Gen Z men in Australia are much less likely to use social media for news (27%). This gender gap is even wider for those who say social media is their main sources of news; 27% of women and 16% of men use social media as their main source.

Women also prefer different formats of news – Gen Z women are most likely to engage with news-related videos on TikTok. One in four Australian Gen Z women use TikTok to get news. And Gen Z women are almost twice as likely to say they prefer watching news online (29%) compared to Gen Z men (18%). This gap is possibly due to the way women want stories to be told. More than half of Australian women (55%) say they want positive news. And their higher preference for culture, lifestyle, and local news reflects their preference for news that contains less conflict and negativity.

MEN AND WOMEN DIFFER IN THEIR VIEWS ON IMPORTANT NEWS TOPICS

Significantly, women and men differ in their views on key news topics. The findings here should be considered in light of women's lower interest in and access to news, as well as the traditional gendering of certain 'hard' or 'soft' news topics in news production¹. When asked about the topics of news they pay the most attention to while on social media, women say they have a much greater interest in entertainment, celebrity, lifestyle, and health news on both Facebook and YouTube compared with men. Their interest in sports, politics, and business news is also much lower than men's..

Further, women say they find finance and economic news difficult to understand and apply to their own lives, as such they are just as likely to turn to family and friends for advice as they are to access mainstream financial news.

Women are however more interested in and passionate about environmental issues and climate change than men.

It's possible the 'gendered' nature of news interest partly reflects the gendered nature of news production, particularly the lack of women in editorial, managerial and leadership positions in news organisations². Women's views on news should therefore be considered relationally; news production is a male dominated industry for which women are both the subject of news and an audience for news. On certain issues, it is unlikely female audiences fully separate the issue itself from the (typically male) voice and tone in which news about the issue is delivered.

WOMEN FEEL POORLY REPRESENTED BY NEWS

For many women, news may be something to talk about with family and friends; they like reading comments on social media just as much as men, and they are much more likely to talk to friends and colleagues about news (40%) than men (34%).

However, women, and particularly young women, feel they are unfairly represented in mainstream news compared to men.

Among Gen Z (32%) and Gen Y (27%), women are much more likely than men (Gen Z 19%; Gen Y 20%) to say their gender is unfairly reported on. They are also much more likely to feel this than Gen X women (16%) and those aged 58 or older (17%). This suggests that young Australian women in particular view news organisations as failing to cover stories about them fairly and adequately.

The data points to a significant deficit in the types and topics of news that Australian women audiences are seeking in news media. More and more women, especially among the younger cohorts are turning to alternative sources of information such as social media platforms. This has financial implications for the news industry. Among Gen Z women who currently don't pay for news, more than a quarter (28%) say they would pay if the news was more

relevant to them. So attracting young female audiences may be a key to more sustainability for news businesses and mainstream news media.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Overall, this special report provides a broad overview of the gendered nature of news consumption in Australia. The findings clearly show that women are less interested in and engaged with news, more likely to be avoiding news, and are seeking out news and information on social media at higher rates than men. The implications of this trend, should it continue, are of concern for the news industry as well as Australian society more broadly. The news in Australia is already under substantial financial pressure as revenue shifts to digital advertising. There is a possibility that news organisations may become financially dependent on a smaller core audience of young to middle-aged, highly educated men, as these people are more likely to be highly interested in news and pay for it. This dependency could actively disincentivise the kind of reporting that challenges social structures that privilege the perspectives of affluent men at the expense of other Australians.

Additionally, news organisations have a social responsibility to speak to and for the broadest characterisation of what it means to be Australian. As news plays a vital role in fostering national identity, building social cohesion, and informing voters, without news that speaks to them there is a risk that women and minorities could become further disenfranchised from mainstream social and political debates.

But while that may be the case, it is important to note that this research is limited in the depth of understanding of social trends it can reveal. While this series of surveys has produced consistent and reliable data, with global comparisons, it is first and foremost a self-report survey of respondents' perceptions and attitudes at a series of points in time. Additional qualitative and interview research is needed to provide greater depth and clarity to the findings, answering questions about how women may conceive news and politics in a meaningfully distinct way. News plays different roles in different communities as well, and future research that engages with distinct regional, cultural, and language communities is also needed. As such, this report presents this data as a broad overview of trends, that needs to be supplemented by more specific future research for more substantive conclusions to be drawn.

¹ North, L. (2016). The gender of 'soft' and 'hard' news. *Journalism Studies*, 17(3), 356-373. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2014.987551>

² Hanusch, F. (2013). Journalists in a time of change: Evidence from a new survey of Australia's journalistic workforce. *Australian Journalism Review*, 35(1), 29-42.

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KEY FINDINGS

CHAPTER 1 WOMEN'S NEWS CONSUMPTION TRENDS

- 68% of women access news daily compared to 80% of men.
- Less than half of women (40%) report being very or extremely interested in news compared to 60% of men.
- Gen Z women (54%) are the least likely to access news daily and only 23% are interested in news, the lowest among all genders and generations.
- Nearly half of women (48%) use social media for news (M 42%) and more than a quarter (27%) rely on social media as their main source of news (M 16%).
- One in four Gen Z women use TikTok for news. Gen Z women are also the most likely to engage with news-related videos on TikTok across all demographics.

CHAPTER 3 WOMEN'S NEWS ENGAGEMENT

- Women are less likely to interact with online news than men. Around half (46%) of Gen Z women engage with news online through activities such as liking and sharing news.
- Women are more likely to avoid news (72%) than men (67%).
- Women tend to avoid news about sport and politics. However, they are less likely than men to avoid news related to their local community, culture, lifestyle, climate change and social justice issues.
- While 56% of all women encounter misinformation (M 69%), Gen Z women (69%) are more likely to report having encountered false or misleading information online.
- Gen Z women are more proactive in fact-checking than Gen Z men: 83% say they've engaged in some type of verification, compared to 75% of Gen Z men.

CHAPTER 2 WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF NEWS

- Women are less interested in and engaged with politics than men, with only 22% of women saying they are highly interested in politics compared to almost half (49%) of men.
- 23% of women are uncertain about their political orientation compared to only 7% of men.
- Trust in news is gendered: women are 10 percentage points less trusting of the news they consume and 11 percentage points less trusting of news generally than men.
- Women are less likely than men to consider public funded news services (i.e. ABC and SBS News) as important to society and themselves.
- They also find economic and finance news more difficult to understand and apply in their daily lives than men.

CHAPTER 4 WOMEN'S VIEWS ON GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE

- Women are less likely than men to say they receive adequate coverage in news.
- Gen Z women (46%) in particular, are least likely to say that the news provides adequate coverage of their gender compared to men across all generations.
- Women are also less likely than men to say that the news provides fair coverage of their gender (F 51%; M 57%), people their age (F 47%; M 51%), and people from their area (F 54%; M 57%).
- Gen Z women (63%) are more concerned about climate change than Gen Z men (56%), Gen X men (45%) and men who are 58 or older (46%).
- Overall, women are less likely than men to say news should take a position on climate change, but Gen Z women (48%) are more likely than men of all generations to say it should take a position in favour of climate action.

METHODOLOGY

The *Digital News Report (DNR): Australia* is part of a global survey of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, an international research centre in the comparative study of journalism based at Oxford University. The News and Media Research Centre at the University of Canberra is the Australian partner and has produced nine issues of the annual *DNR: Australia* reports (2015-2023).

The survey, carried out by YouGov via an online questionnaire, takes place between January and February every year. In each country, samples that represent the national

demographics are collected, with quotas based on age, gender, and geographical locations. Quotas for education were applied in all regions except for Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, India, South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya. In some countries³ including Australia, political quotas based on vote choice in the most recent national election were also applied. In each country, the data were weighted to represent its population based on country's census information. In the special report, we analyse the global average across 46 countries⁴.

AUSTRALIAN SAMPLE IN 2023

In Australia, from an online panel of 441,866 adult Australians who have internet access, a sample of 2,025 was included in the analysis. The data were weighted to represent the

total population based on Australian Bureau of Statistics Census data. The data used in this report is primarily from the 2023 report.

GENERATIONS

In the *DNR: Australia*, we adopt the generational categories from PEW Research, which include 'Gen Z', 'Gen Y', 'Gen X', 'Baby Boomers', and '77+ (Silent Generation and Greatest Generation)'. For this special report, due to the small sample sizes of those aged 77 or older, we combined the two oldest two

categories into a single group labelled '58 or older'. The age span calculation is based on the respondent's age as of December 2022. This is because the fieldwork was conducted in early 2023 and most people would not have reached their birthdays at the time of the survey.

Birth year	Generation	Abbreviation used	Age span
1901-64	Baby Boomers - Greatest Generation	58+	58+
1965-80	Gen X	X	42-57
1981-96	Gen Y, Millennials	Y	26-41
1997-	Gen Z, Post-millennials	Z	18-25

GENDER CATEGORIES

This research primarily compares those who identify as male or female. The sample for the *Digital News Report* currently includes only those who identify as male or female, and does not encompass a broader range of gender identities.

ROUNDING

When calculating percentages, we round the figures, which means in some cases the total may not add up to 100%.

2023 Participating Countries

	Argentina	ARG*
	Australia	AUS*
	Austria	AUT*
	Belgium	BEL*
	Brazil	BRA*
	Bulgaria	BUL
	Canada	CAN*
	Chile	CHL*
	Colombia	COL*
	Croatia	CRO
	Czech Republic	CZE*
	Denmark	DEN*
	Finland	FIN*
	France	FRA*
	Germany	GER*
	Greece	GRE
	Hong Kong	HKG*
	Hungary	HUN*
	India	IND
	Indonesia	INA
	Ireland	IRE*
	Italy	ITA*
	Japan	JPN*
	Kenya	KEN
	Korea, South	KOR*
	Malaysia	MAL
	Mexico	MEX
	Netherlands	NLD*
	Nigeria	NGR
	Norway	NOR*
	Peru	PER*
	Philippines	PHI
	Poland	POL*
	Portugal	POR*
	Romania	ROU
	Singapore	SGP*
	Slovakia	SVK*
	South Africa	RSA
	Spain	SPA*
	Sweden	SWE*
	Switzerland	SUI*
	Taiwan	TWN*
	Thailand	THA*
	Turkey	TUR
	UK	UK*
	USA	USA*

*Included in 33 countries in our comparative analysis

³ Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, the United States and United Kingdom

⁴ Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Korea (South), Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, UK and USA

A black and white photograph of a woman in profile, holding a white coffee cup to her lips. She is wearing a dark, perforated wristband. In the foreground, a laptop is open on a white surface. A teal rectangular overlay is positioned on the right side of the image, containing the title text in white, bold, sans-serif font.

1 WOMEN'S NEWS CONSUMPTION TRENDS

WOMEN ACCESS NEWS LESS FREQUENTLY THAN MEN

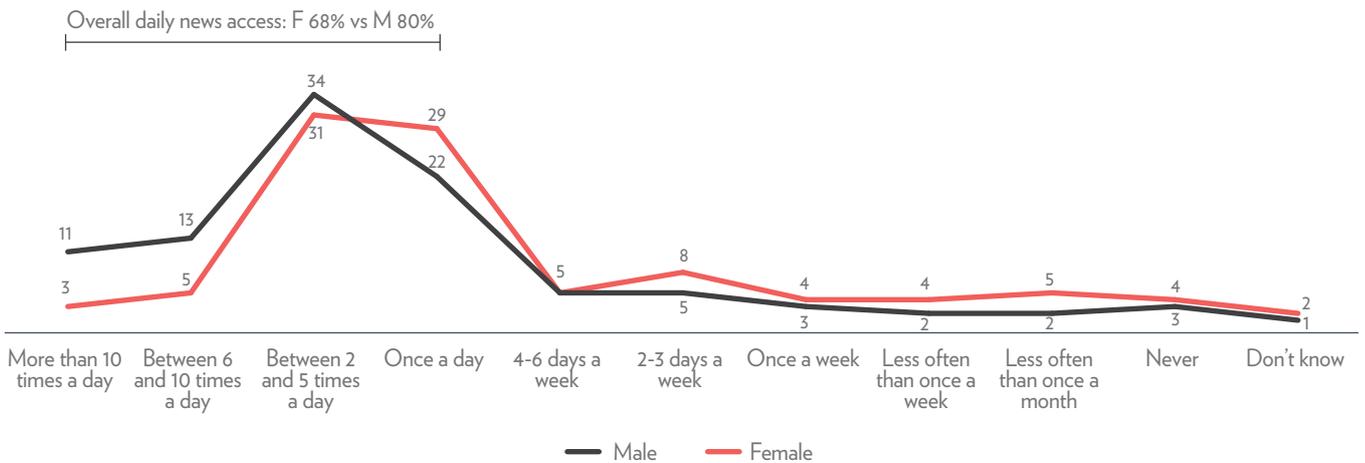
We categorised news consumers into three groups based on their frequency of news access: heavy (more than once a day), light (once a day to less than once a week) and very low/non-users (less than once a month or never).

Women are less likely than men to be heavy news consumers, with only 39% of women accessing news more than once a day compared to 57% of men (see **figure 1.1**).

Nevertheless, a significant number of women (68%) access news daily.

The gender gap in news consumption in Australia is wider when compared to other countries. There is a 12 percentage point gap in daily news access between men and women in Australia (F 68%; M 80%), compared to only 4 percentage points based on the global average for this survey (F 80%; M 84%).

FIGURE 1.1: NEWS ACCESS BY GENDER (%)



[Q1b_NEW] Typically, how often do you access news? By news we mean national, international, regional/local news and other topical events accessed via any platform (radio, TV, newspaper or online) [Base: N=2,025].

GEN Z WOMEN ARE THE LIGHTEST NEWS CONSUMERS

Gen Z women (54%) are the least likely to access news on a daily basis among all genders and generations. However, the gender gap in news access narrows with age, with 79% of women aged 58 or older accessing news daily, a rate that is similar to that of men in that generation (81%)(see **table 1.1**).

The data show that age is closely related to the gender gap in news consumption in Australia. Notable gender gaps are observed among Gen Z (17 percentage points), Y (19 pp), and X (15 pp), with women in those generations being significantly less likely to access news daily compared to their male counterparts. However, the gender gap doesn't vary significantly based on generation in the global dataset. This suggests that this phenomenon is particular to Australia.

TABLE 1.1: DAILY NEWS ACCESS BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)

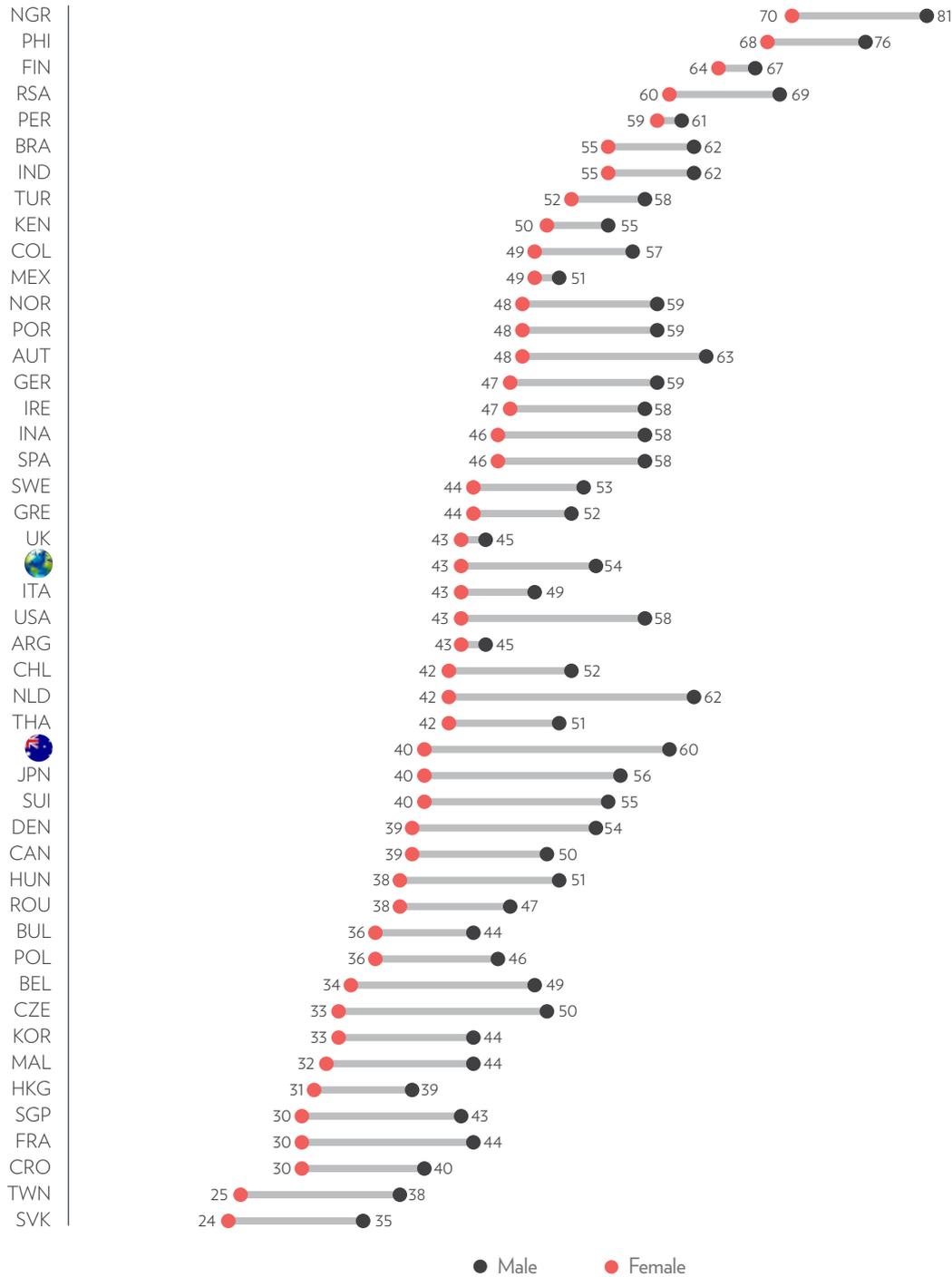
	Australia			Global		
	Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap
Gen Z	71	54	-17	70	65	-5
Gen Y	78	59	-19	81	76	-5
Gen X	84	69	-15	88	82	-6
58+	81	79	-2	92	87	-4

Note: The figures represent the percentage of respondents who access news once a day or more frequently.

There is a significant gender gap in the level of interest in news. Less than half of Australian women (40%) report being very or extremely interested in news compared to 60% of men. The gap in interest between genders is the

widest in Australia (20 pp) compared to other countries, with the most similar country to Australia being the Netherlands (20 pp) (see **figure 1.2**).

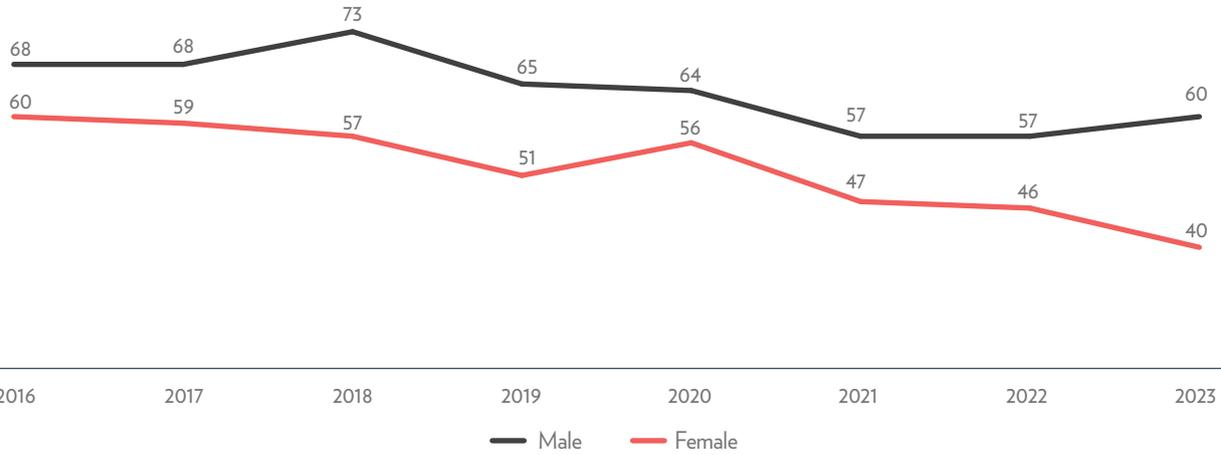
FIGURE 1.2: GENDER GAP IN NEWS INTEREST BY COUNTRY (%)



[Q1c] How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news? Excluded respondents who access news once or month or less and non-users. [Base: N=93,895]
 Note: The figures represent the percentage of respondents who are very or extremely interested in news.

The gender gap in the level of interest in news in Australia has widened substantially over the past few years from 8 pp difference in 2016 to 20 pp in 2023 (see **figure 1.3**).

FIGURE 1.3: GENDER GAP IN NEWS INTEREST 2016 - 2023 (%)



As with news access, the gender gap in news interest is narrower among older generations. Half of women aged 58 or older (50%) report being very or extremely interested in news, compared to 54% of men aged 58 or older. This gap is considerably smaller than the global gap between

men and women of that generation (12 pp). Across all demographics, Gen Z women in Australia (23%) are the least likely to say they are very or extremely interested in news, compared to their global counterparts (32%).

TABLE 1.2: INTEREST IN NEWS BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)

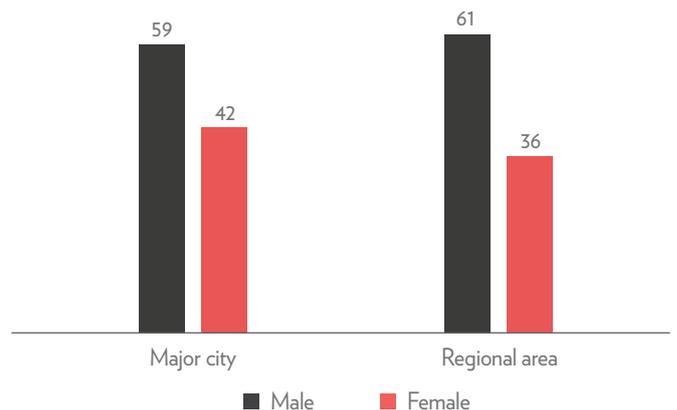
	Australia			Global		
	Male	Female	Gap	Male	Female	Gap
Gen Z	42	23	-18	39	32	-7
Gen Y	65	32	-34	51	40	-11
Gen X	70	41	-29	56	44	-11
58+	54	50	-3	62	50	-12

Note: The figures represent the percentage of respondents who are very or extremely interested in news.

WOMEN IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA ARE LESS INTERESTED IN NEWS

Geography seems to contribute to the wide gender gap in news interest. Women living in regional parts of Australia are less likely to be interested in news (36%) than women in major cities (42%). In contrast, men in regional areas are only slightly more likely to be interested in news (61%) than men in major cities (59%) (see **figure 1.4**).

FIGURE 1.4: GENDER GAP IN NEWS ACCESS AND INTEREST BY REGION (%)

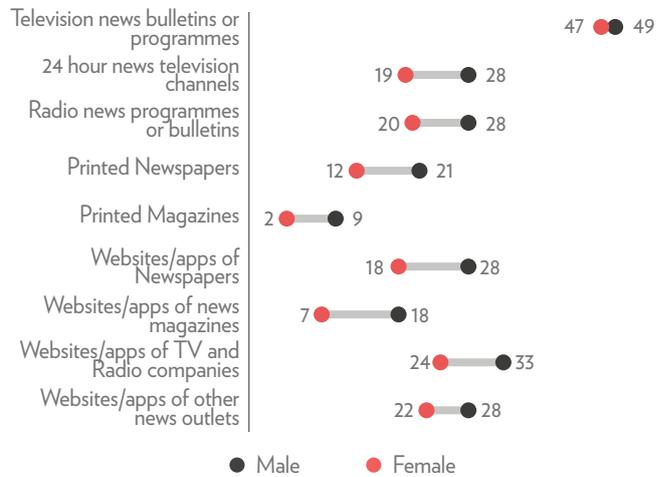


AUSTRALIA'S GENDER GAP IN THE USE OF NEWS WEBSITES & APPS IS THE WIDEST GLOBALLY

We asked respondents about the news platforms they accessed in the past week as sources of news. While there is no significant gender gap in the use of TV news bulletins (F 47%; M 49%), women are notably less likely than men to report visiting news websites or apps of mainstream news outlets, which include the online offerings of newspapers, news magazines, TV and radio outlets (see **figure 1.5**). Given the decline in audience traffic to news websites⁵, there is an opportunity to attract female audiences as they are currently underserved in this context.

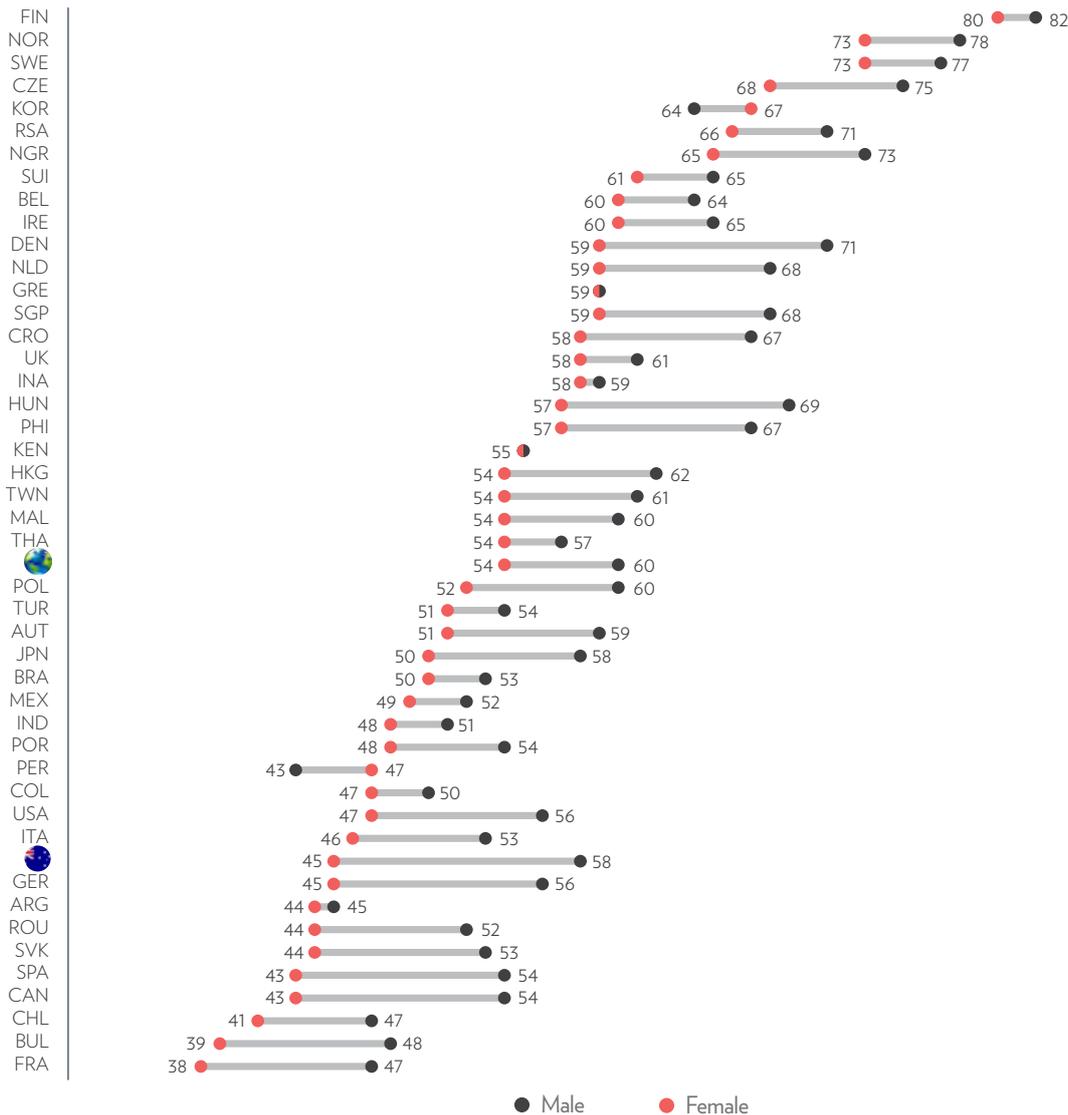
Australia's gender gap in the use of online news websites or apps (13 pp) is significantly larger than the global average of 6 percentage points (see **figure 1.6**). Countries like Peru and South Korea have more women visiting online news websites or apps than their male counterparts.

FIGURE 1.5: NEWS PLATFORMS BY GENDER (TV, RADIO, NEWSPAPERS, MAGAZINES & NEWS WEBSITES) (%)



[Q3] Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=2,025].

FIGURE 1.6: GENDER GAP IN THE USE OF ONLINE NEWS WEBSITES BY COUNTRY (%)



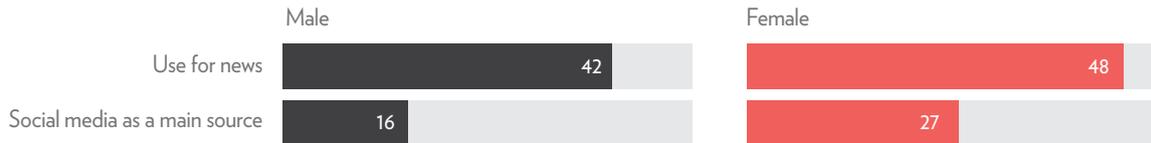
⁵Luba Kassova (2022) *From Outrage to Opportunity: How to include the missing perspectives of women of all colours in news leadership and coverage.*

WOMEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO USE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR NEWS

While overall interest in and access of news is lower among Australian women than men, women are significantly more likely to turn to social media for news than their male counterparts. Nearly half of women (48%) use social media for news, compared to only 42% of men (see **figure 1.7**).

The gender gap is wider for social media as a main news source. More than a quarter of women (27%) say that they rely on social media as their main source of news, whereas only 16% of men say the same.

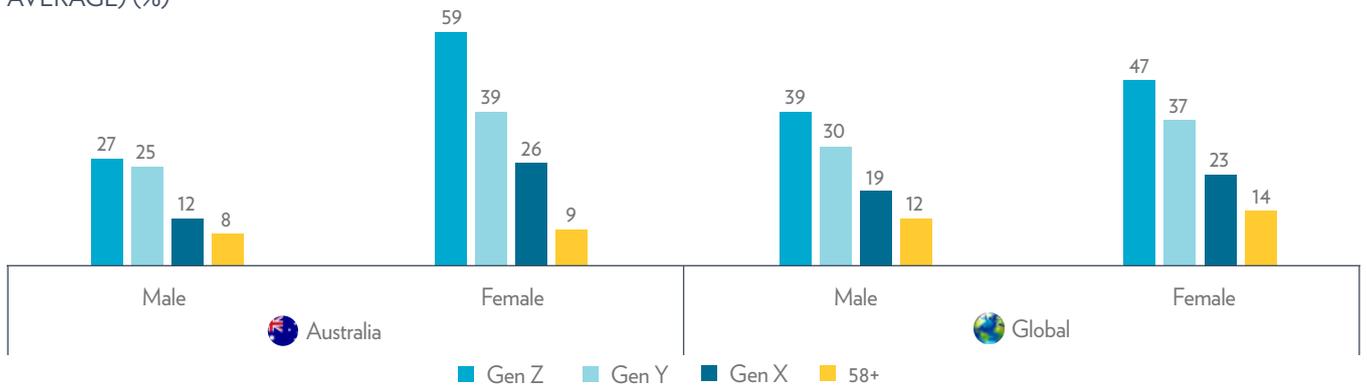
FIGURE 1.7: SOCIAL MEDIA USE FOR NEWS BY GENDER (%)



Australian women (27%) are equally as likely to use social media as their main news source as their global counterparts (27%) (see **figure 1.8**). On the other hand, Australian men (16%) are less inclined to use social media as their main source of news compared to the global average (23%).

Younger people are more likely to rely on social media for news, especially Gen Z women. Gen Z women in Australia (59%) have a much higher tendency to rely on social media for news compared to the global average (47%). In contrast, Gen Z men in Australia are less likely to rely on social media for news than in other countries.

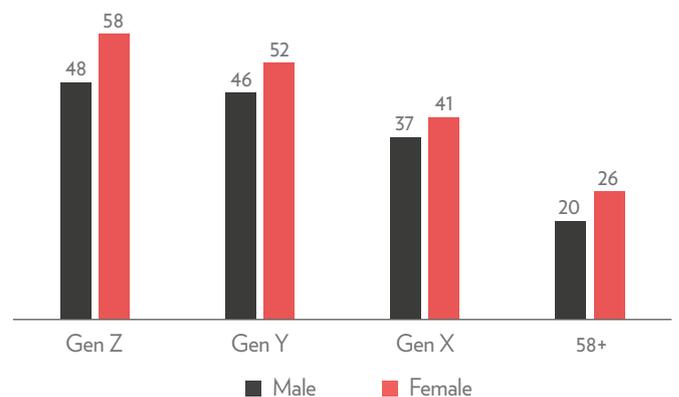
FIGURE 1.8: SOCIAL MEDIA AS MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS BY GENDER AND GENERATION (AUSTRALIA AND THE GLOBAL AVERAGE) (%)



THE MAJORITY OF GEN Z WOMEN ARE INCIDENTAL NEWS CONSUMERS

Australian women are also more likely to encounter news incidentally while browsing on social media, rather than seeking it out intentionally. Our data indicate that 41% of women say they come across news through social media, compared to 35% of men. This is higher among Gen Z women, with more than half of that generation (58%) bumping into news incidentally while using social media (see **figure 1.9**).

FIGURE 1.9: ENCOUNTERING NEWS ON SOCIAL MEDIA BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)



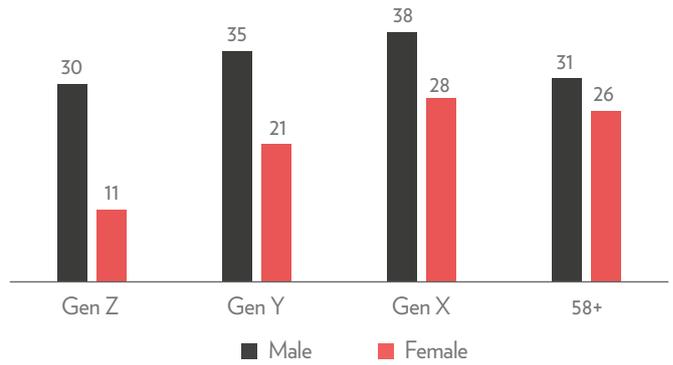
[Q10] Thinking about how you got news online (via computer, mobile or any device) in the last week, which were the ways in which you came across news stories?: Used social media and came across news that way (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) [Base: N=2,025].

On the other hand, Australian women are less likely than men to go directly to news brands to find stories, with only 23% of women compared to 34% of men going directly to news websites or apps. The gender gap is significantly larger among members of Gen Z with only one in ten Gen Z women (11%) going directly to news websites or apps, compared to nearly one in three Gen Z men (30%) (see **figure 1.10**).

When it comes to general use, Australian men and women prefer different social media platforms (see **figure 1.11**). The majority of women (72%) use Facebook, compared to 56% of men. Facebook Messenger is also considerably more popular among women, with a majority of them (57%) using it, compared to only 39% of men. For men, YouTube is more popular as a source of news (61%) than it is for women (54%).

Instagram is used by nearly half of Australian women (46%), while one in five use platforms like Snapchat (22%), TikTok

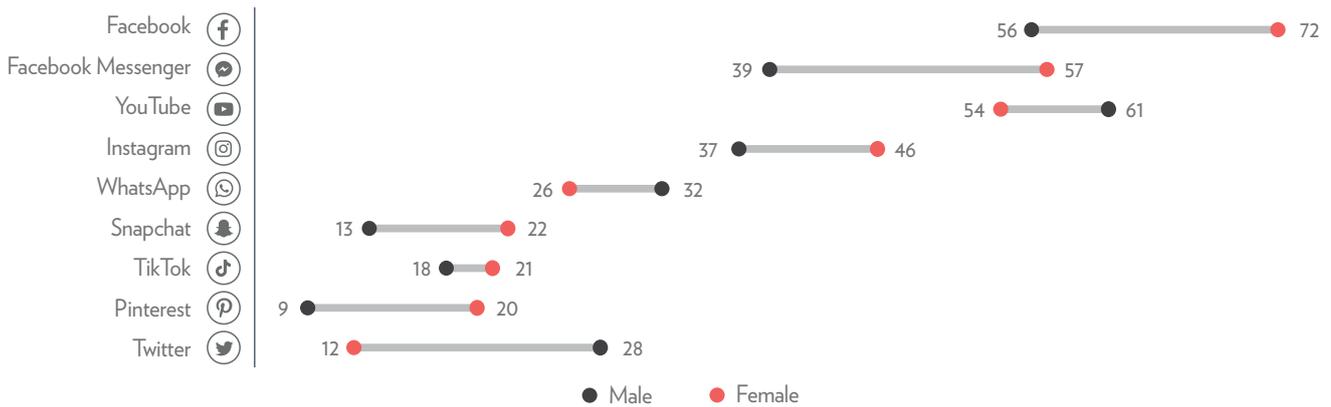
FIGURE 1.10: IN DIRECT ACCESS TO NEWS WEBSITES BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)



[Q10] Thinking about how you got news online (via computer, mobile or any device) in the last week, which were the ways in which you came across news stories: Went directly to a news website or app (e.g. BBC News, Guardian, MailOnline, HuffPost) [Base: N=2,025].

(21%), and Pinterest (20%) - all of which have higher rates of use among women than men.

FIGURE 1.11: SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS USED FOR GENERAL USE (%)

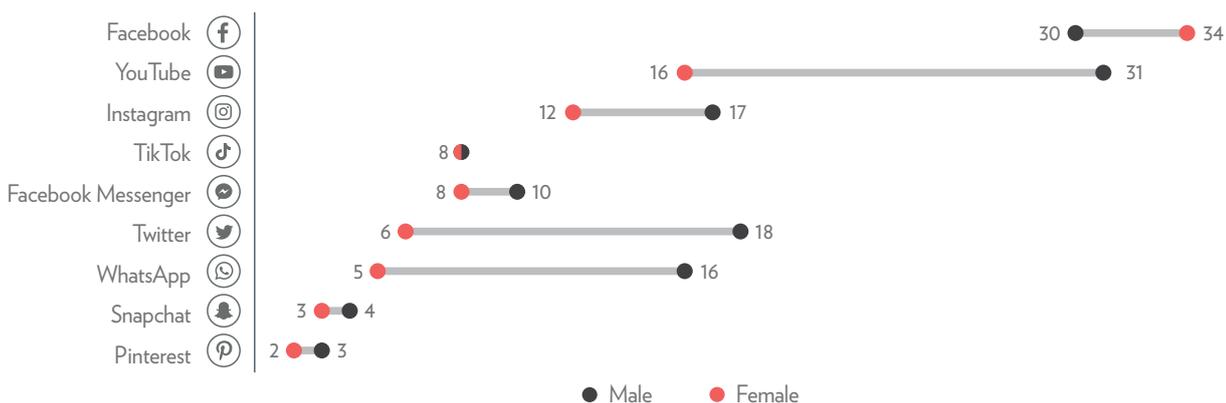


ONE IN FOUR GEN Z WOMEN USE TIKTOK FOR NEWS

More than one-third of women (34%) use Facebook as a source of news, which is slightly higher than men’s usage of the platform for news (30%) (see **figure 1.12**). While men

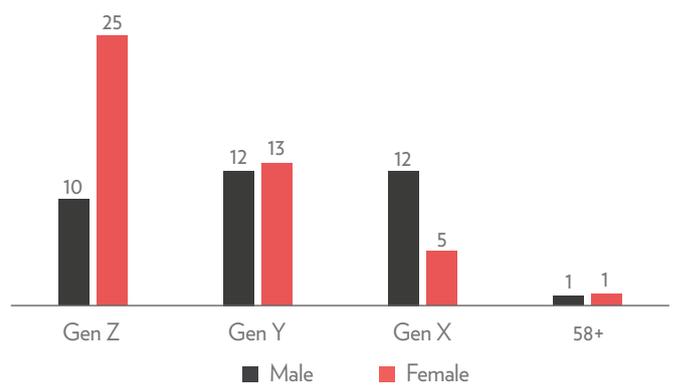
are much more likely to use YouTube, Twitter, WhatsApp and Instagram as a general news source, both men and women use TikTok for news equally (8%).

FIGURE 1.12: SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS USED FOR NEWS (%)



TikTok has seen a significant increase in use for news in Australia in recent years⁶, which appears to be driven primarily by Gen Z women. In 2023, one in four Gen Z women (25%) use TikTok for news, which is considerably higher than other demographics (see **figure 1.13**). The higher popularity of Tik Tok among Gen Z women than men is a global trend.

FIGURE 1.13: TIKTOK FOR NEWS BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)

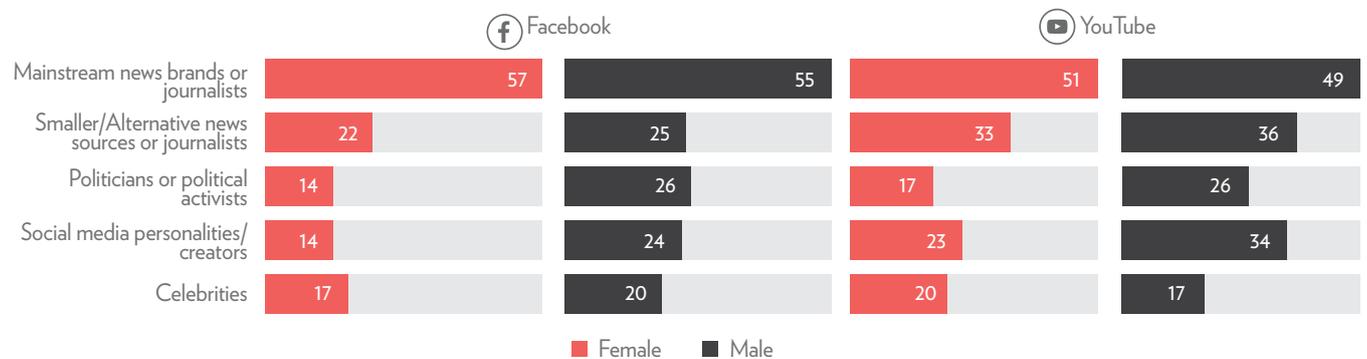


AUSTRALIAN WOMEN TEND TO PAY MORE ATTENTION TO MAINSTREAM NEWS BRANDS ON FACEBOOK AND YOUTUBE

We asked those who say they use social platforms for news what sources they pay the most attention to. The data shows that Australian social media users are more likely to pay attention to mainstream media and journalists than other sources while on social media, with women being slightly more likely to pay attention to mainstream news (Facebook 57%; YouTube 51%) than men (Facebook 55%; YouTube 49%) (see **figure 1.14**).

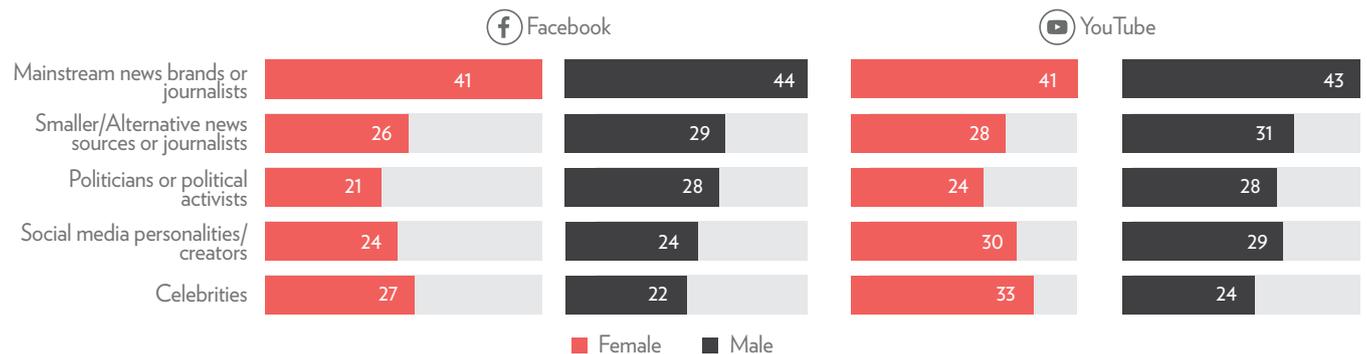
The trend in Australia is more pronounced when compared with global figures, especially among women. Australian women are much more inclined to look to mainstream news outlets and journalists as a source of news while on social media (Facebook 57%; YouTube 51%) than their global counterparts (Facebook 41%; YouTube 41%) (see **figure 1.15**). On the other hand, Australian women (Facebook 17%; YouTube 20%) are less likely to say they pay attention to celebrities as sources compared to women internationally (Facebook 27%; YouTube 33%).

FIGURE 1.14: SOURCES OF NEWS ON FACEBOOK AND YOUTUBE BY PLATFORM AND GENDER (%)



[Q12_Social_sources] You said that you use [Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube] for news... When it comes to news on [Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube], which of these sources do you generally pay most attention to? Please select all that apply. [Base: Facebook (N=452), YouTube (N=294)]

FIGURE 1.15: SOURCES OF NEWS ON FACEBOOK AND YOUTUBE BY PLATFORM AND GENDER (GLOBAL AVERAGE) (%)



[Base: Facebook (N=24,803), YouTube (N=16,528)]

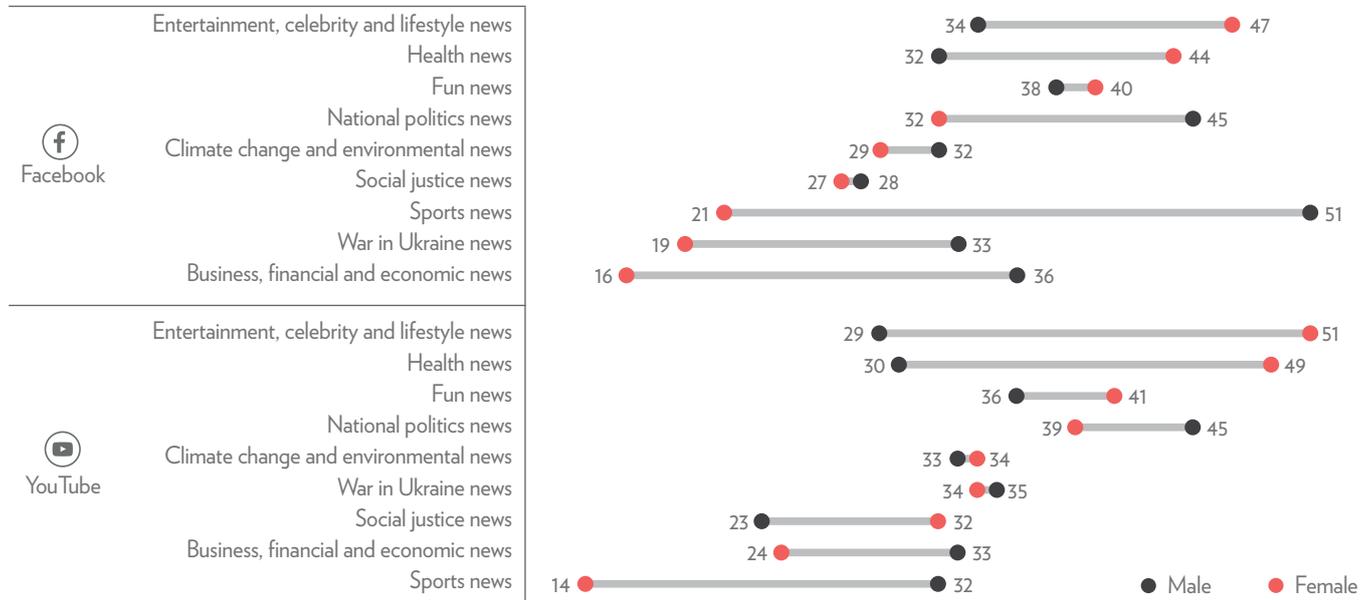
⁶ Park, S., McGuinness, K., Fisher, C., Lee, J., McCallum, K., Cai, X., Chatskin, M., Mardjanto, L. & Yao, P. (2023). *Digital News Report: Australia 2023*. Canberra: News and Media Research Centre, University of Canberra.

WOMEN AND MEN HAVE VARYING LEVELS OF INTEREST IN DIFFERENT NEWS TOPICS

When asked about the topics of news they pay the most attention to while on social media, women say they have much greater interest in entertainment, celebrity, lifestyle,

and health news on both Facebook and YouTube compared with men. Women’s interest in sports, politics, and business news is much lower than men’s. (see **figure 1.16**).

FIGURE 1.16: NEWS TOPICS ON FACEBOOK AND YOUTUBE (%)



GENDER AND TYPES OF NEWS (2022)

The gender difference observed in the news topics on social media aligns with the gap in interest in news in general, as highlighted by the *Digital News Report: Australia 2022*. The report reveals that men generally demonstrate greater interest in business, political news, and sports (see **table 1**). This discrepancy reflects the existing gender gaps in news production, particularly in areas such as politics, economics, crime, and sports beats. The representation of women in these fields is significantly lower, as indicated by the 2019 State of Technology in Global Newsrooms Survey conducted by the International Center for Journalists. According to the report, women journalists are less likely to occupy roles in politics, economy, crime, and sports reporting (see **figure 1**). The lowest representation of women was specifically found in the sports domain.

These findings highlight not only the gendered gaps in news topic interest but also the underlying gendered nature of news production. The preferences and interests of news consumers are often shaped by the content that is produced and made available to them.

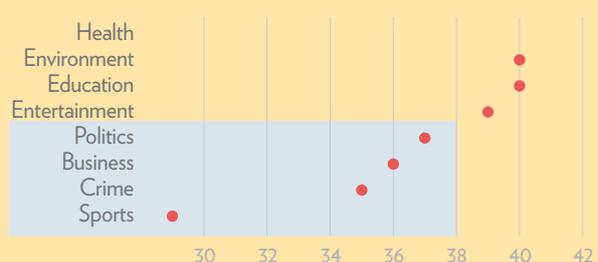
The gender disparities observed in news consumption patterns can be attributed, at least in part, to the gendered nature of news production, where certain topics are traditionally associated with or prioritised for specific genders.

TABLE 1: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF NEWS ARE YOU INTERESTED IN? (%)

	Women	Men
News about mental health/wellness	36	22
Entertainment and celebrity news	31	21
News about crime and personal security	46	39
Environment and climate change news	38	33
Education news	24	19
Political news	39	51
Business, financial and economic news	24	39
Sports news	23	49

Source: *Digital News Report: Australia 2022*

FIGURE 1: WOMEN AS A PERCENTAGE OF NEWS BEAT STAFF (% OF FEMALE JOURNALISTS)



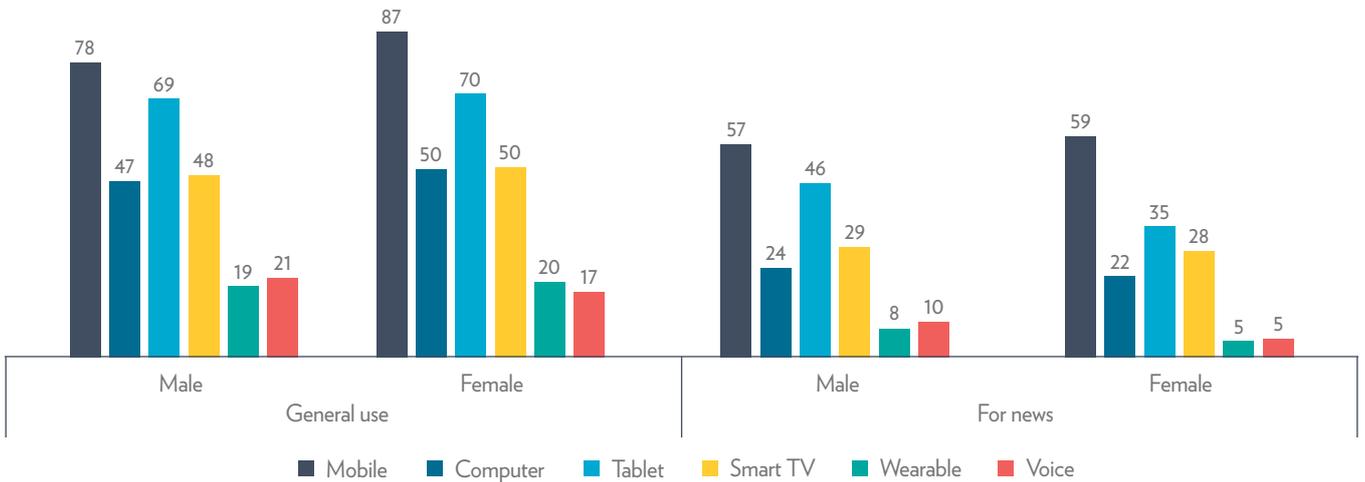
Source: ICFJ 2019 State of Technology in Global Newsrooms Survey

70% OF GEN Z WOMEN USE MOBILE PHONES FOR NEWS

Women are more likely to use mobile phones for any purpose (87%) than men (78%) (see **figure 1.17**). Similarly, a slightly higher proportion of women (59%) use mobile phones to access news, compared to men (57%). On the

other hand, men are more likely to use tablet devices (46%) compared to women (35%). The use of wearable devices (8%) and voice speaker devices (10%) to access news is also higher among men than women (5% for both).

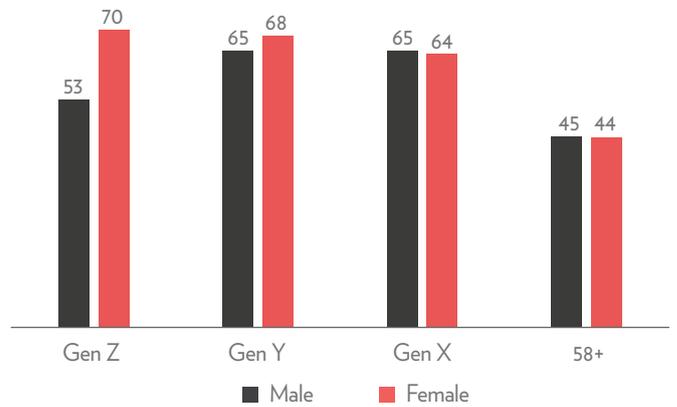
FIGURE 1.17: DEVICES USED FOR ANY PURPOSE AND NEWS (%)



[Q8A_2023] Which, if any, of the following devices do you ever use (for any purpose)? Please select all that apply [Base: N=2,025]

We find a significant gender gap in the use of mobile phones for news among Gen Z. As **figure 1.18** indicates the majority of Gen Z women (70%) use mobile phones to access news, while only half of Gen Z men (53%) do the same.

FIGURE 1.18: MOBILE PHONE USE FOR NEWS BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)



Note here: the data only represent on the mobile users.

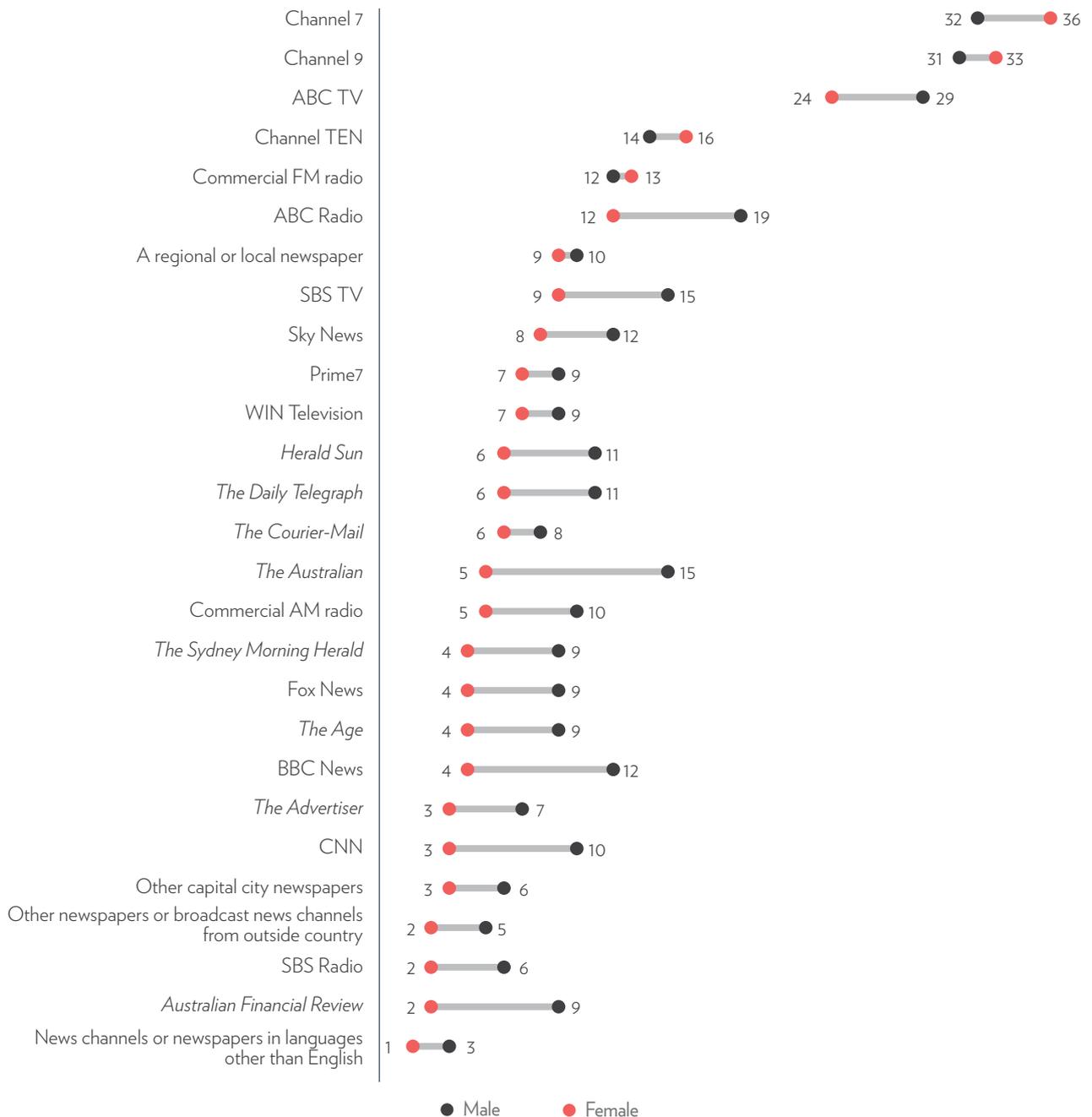
WOMEN TEND TO PREFER FREE-TO-AIR COMMERCIAL TV NEWS, WHILE MEN PREFER ABC AND SBS

News brand preference differs between men and women. Women are more likely to watch free-to-air commercial TV news such as Channel 7 and Channel 9 compared to men (see **figure 1.19**), whereas men prefer to view public service news on ABC TV and SBS TV more than women. BBC news and CNN have the biggest gender gap in their most audiences, with women viewers being 9 and 7 percentage points lower than men respectively.

Public service radio (ABC radio and SBS radio) and commercial AM radio news services are also less popular among female listeners than male. However, the use of commercial FM radio news is roughly similar between women (13%) and men (12%).

Women’s use of print newspapers is also lower than men’s. There is a significant gender gap in the use of *The Australian* and *Australian Financial Review*, with women being 9 and 7 percentage points less likely to say they use these brands.

FIGURE 1.19: GENDER GAP IN THE USE OF OFFLINE NEWS BRANDS (%)



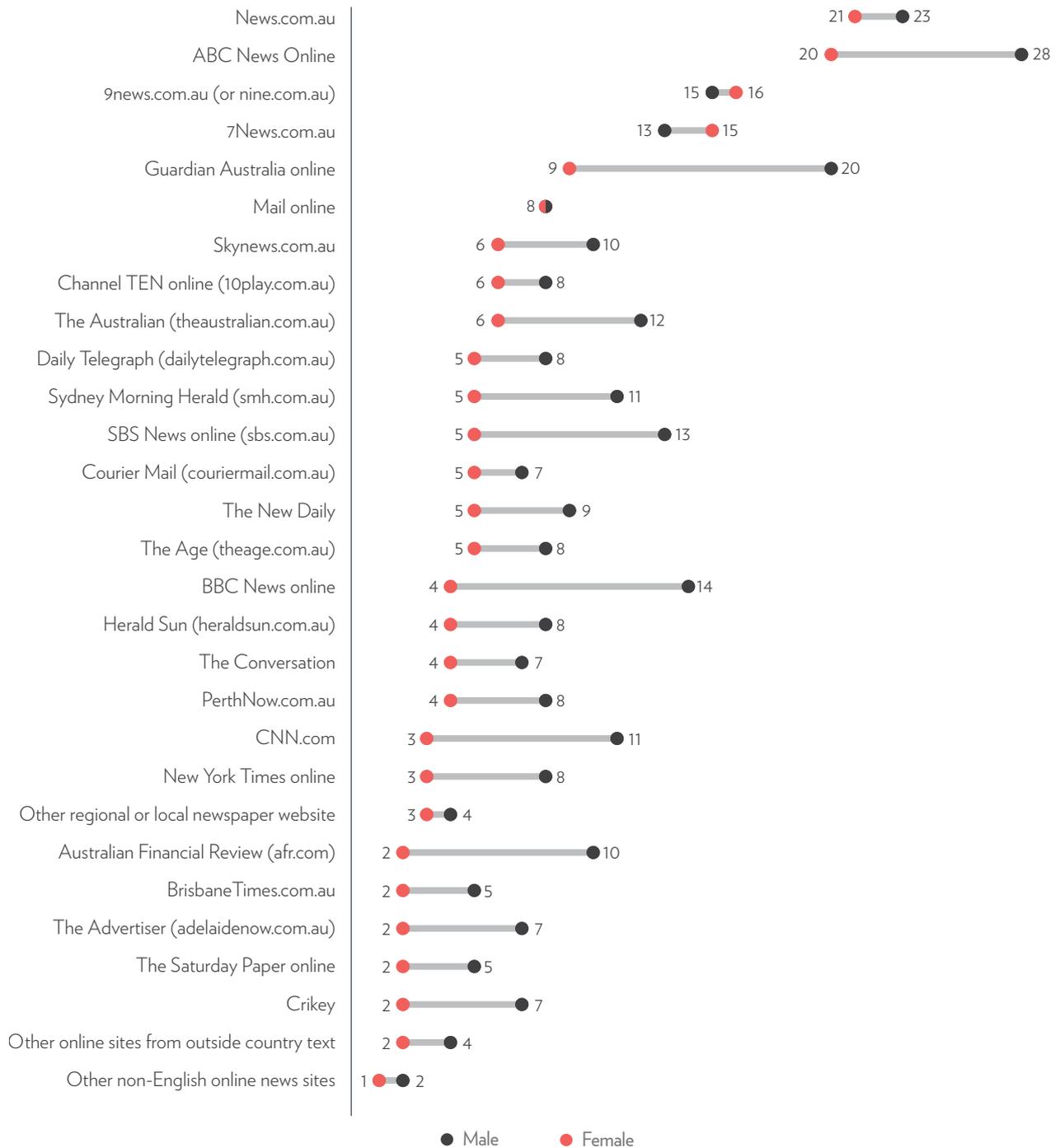
[Q5A1] You said you have used the following brands to access news offline in the last week. Which of these, if any, did you use on 3 days or more? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=2,025].

WOMEN ARE GENERALLY LESS LIKELY TO USE ONLINE NEWS BRANDS

News.com.au is the most popular online news brand among Australian women (21%), while ABC News Online is the top choice for men (28%). Generally, women are less likely to visit online news brand websites than men, except for 9news.com.au and 7news.com.au. There is also a significant gender gap in the reach of online news brands. This is

most clearly demonstrated with Guardian Australia online and BBC News online, which both have a much higher proportion of male news consumers than female. This data reflects men's overall higher news consumption and interest in news.

FIGURE 1.20: GENDER GAP IN THE USE OF ONLINE NEWS BRANDS (%)



[Q5B] Which of the following brands have you used to access news **online** in the last week (via **websites, apps, social media, and other forms of Internet access**)? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=2,025].

GEN Z WOMEN ARE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO PREFER WATCHING NEWS THAN GEN Z MEN

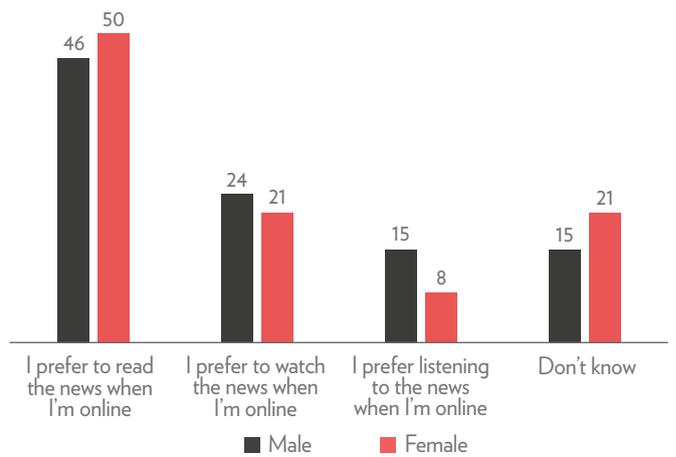
We asked respondents about online news format preferences. As shown in **figure 1.21**, more female news consumers prefer to read news (50%) than men (46%), while male news consumers are more likely to prefer listening to news online (15%) compared to women (8%).

This pattern is reversed among younger generations. Gen Z women are slightly less likely to prefer reading news online (44%) than their male counterparts (48%), but are much more likely to watch it (29%) than Gen Z men (18%) (see **figure 1.22**). Australian Gen Z women’s preference for video news is higher than the global average for Gen Z women (26%).

Although Gen Z women prefer watching news online, our data indicate that their choice of platforms is important. As shown in **figure 1.23**, while the proportion of all women who consumed news-related videos on news websites is lower than that of men, across the generations, Gen Z women were the least engaged with this format. Only one in ten Gen Z women (10%) say they used online news-related video through news websites or news apps in the last week. However, when it comes to TikTok, Gen Z women are the most likely to watch news-related videos, with nearly one-third (29%) saying they do on that platform.

Meanwhile, younger male news consumers are more than twice as likely to engage with news videos on YouTube than women with nearly half of Gen Z men (45%) and Gen Y men (46%) saying they watched a news-related video on that platform in the past week.

FIGURE 1.21: ONLINE NEWS PREFERENCE BY GENDER (%)



[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. [Base: N=2,025]

FIGURE 1.22: ONLINE NEWS PREFERENCE BY GENDER AMONG GEN Z (%)

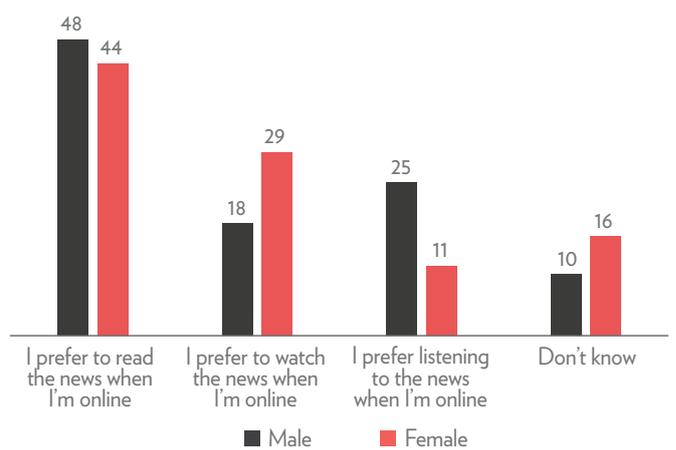
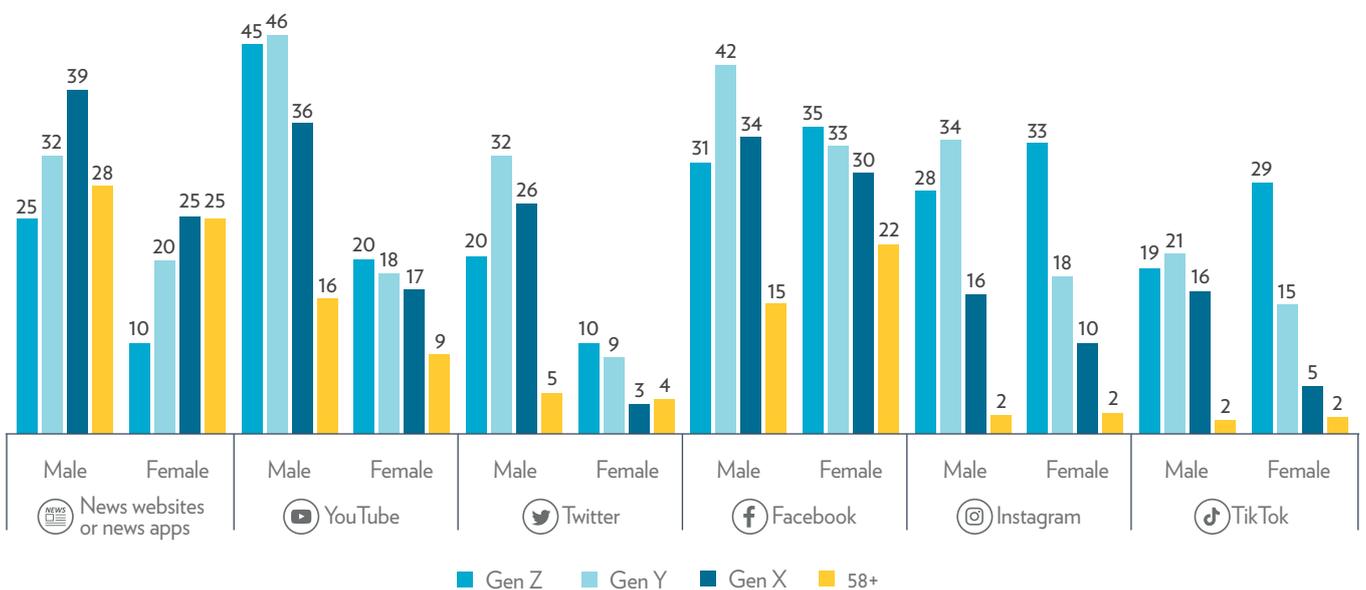


FIGURE 1.23: NEWS-RELATED VIDEO CONSUMPTION BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)



WOMEN ARE MUCH LESS LIKELY TO PAY FOR ONLINE NEWS THAN MEN

The *Digital News Report: Australia* has persistently observed a gender paying gap, where women are much less likely to pay for online news than men. This year, one-third of men said they had paid for online news (32%)

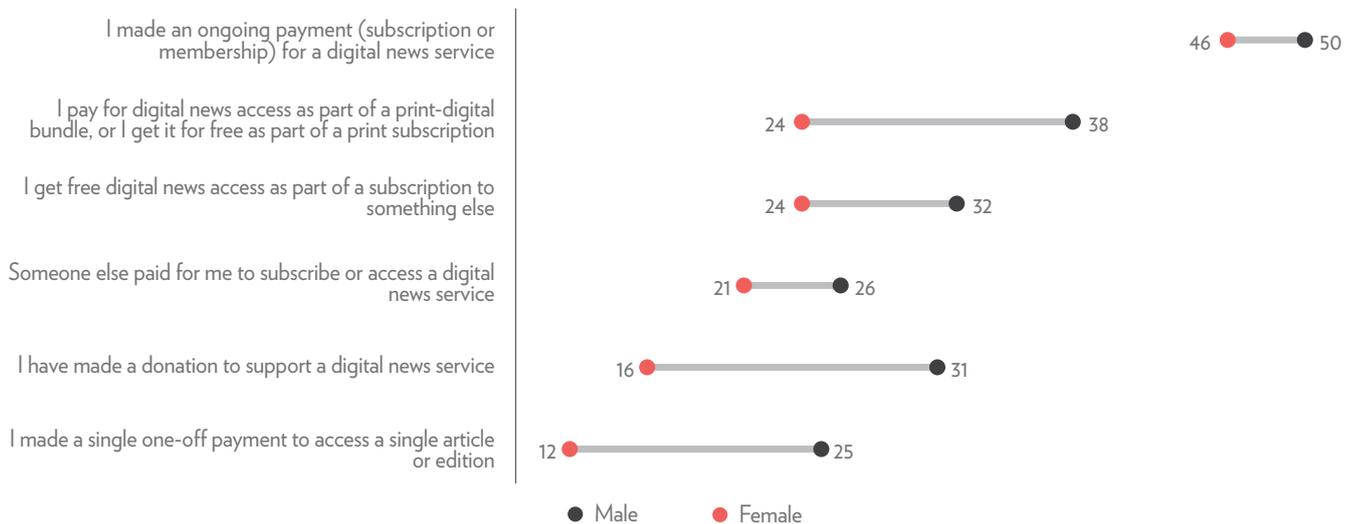
compared to only 13% of women. These gender differences reflect that Australian women are less interested in news and consume less of it than men.

WOMEN ARE MUCH LESS INCLINED TO MAKE DONATIONS TO A DIGITAL NEWS SERVICE THAN MEN

Men are more likely to be regular news subscribers (50%) than women (46%) (see **figure 1.24**). Furthermore, women are significantly less likely to make donations to support a digital news service (16%) and opt for one-off payments

(12%) than their male counterparts (31%, 25%). Women are also much less likely to pay for print digital bundles (24%) compared to men (38%).

FIGURE 1.24: ONLINE NEWS PAYMENT TYPE BY GENDER (%)



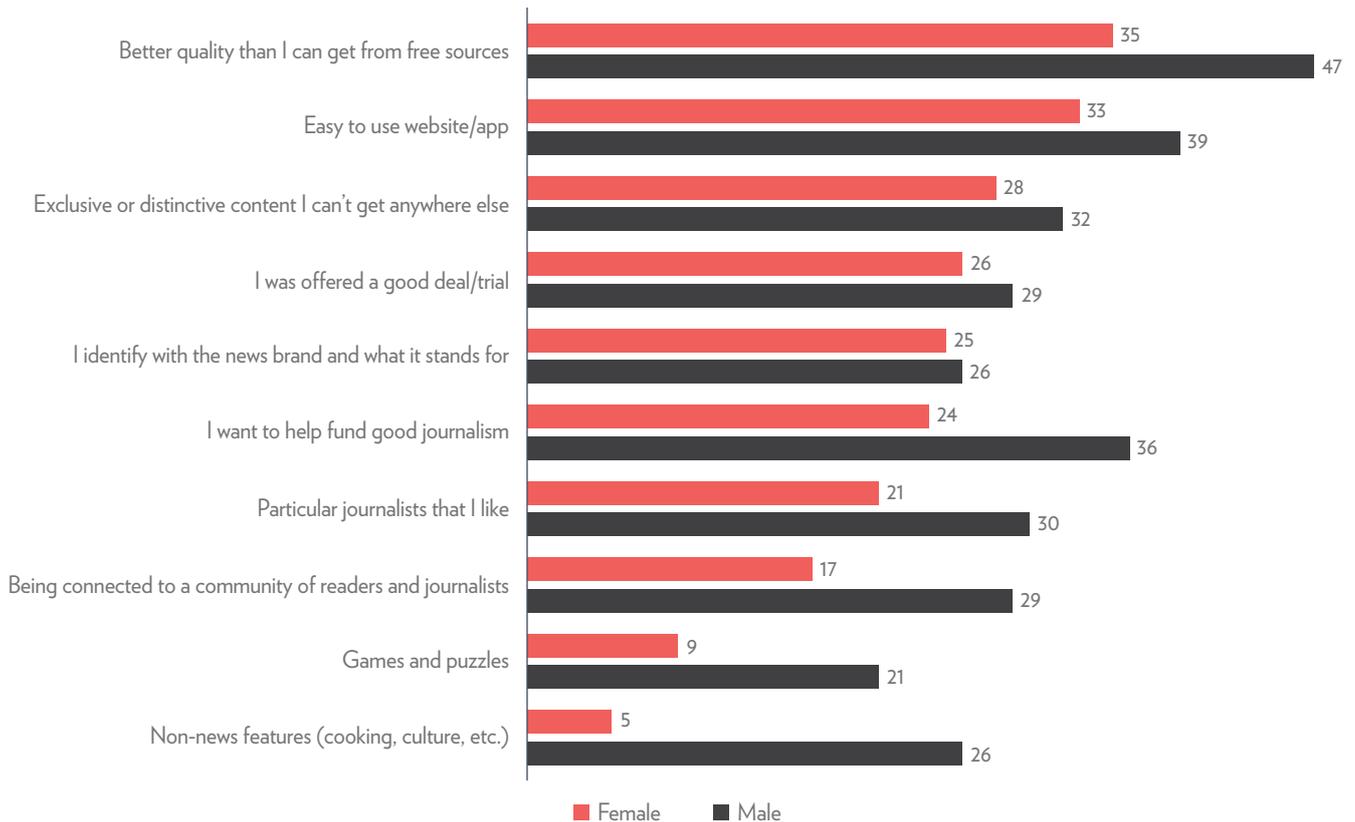
[Q7ai] You said you have accessed paid for ONLINE news content in the last year... Which, if any, of the following ways have you used to pay for ONLINE news content in the last year? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=2,025]

NEWS QUALITY IS THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR INFLUENCING THE DECISION OF MEN AND WOMEN TO PAY FOR NEWS

We asked respondents why they pay for online news. Both women and men consider the quality of news the most important factor influencing their decision to pay for online news, followed by the ease of use of the news website or

app (see **figure 1.25**). However, women are significantly less inclined to pay for news to access non-news features entertainment and leisure features on news sites such as games, cooking and culture compared to men.

FIGURE 1.25: REASONS FOR PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS (%)



[Q1_Pay_2023] You said that you have _paid for access to online news_ in the last year.. What are the most important reasons for this? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=315]

While ‘better quality than what’s available from free sources’ is the top reason for paying across all demographics, there are differences based on gender and age group (see **table 1.3**). Among younger female news consumers, ‘ease of use’ of the online news site and ‘an offer for a good deal’ are among the top reasons for paying for news. On the

other hand, ‘helping fund good journalism’ and ‘non-news features’ are the main motivations for young male news consumers. Older female news consumers tend to pay for news based on convenience (ease of use) and for exclusive content, whereas older male news consumers say they pay for online news produced by journalists they like.

TABLE 1.3: TOP 3 REASONS FOR PAYING FOR ONLINE NEWS BY GENDER AND AGE (%)

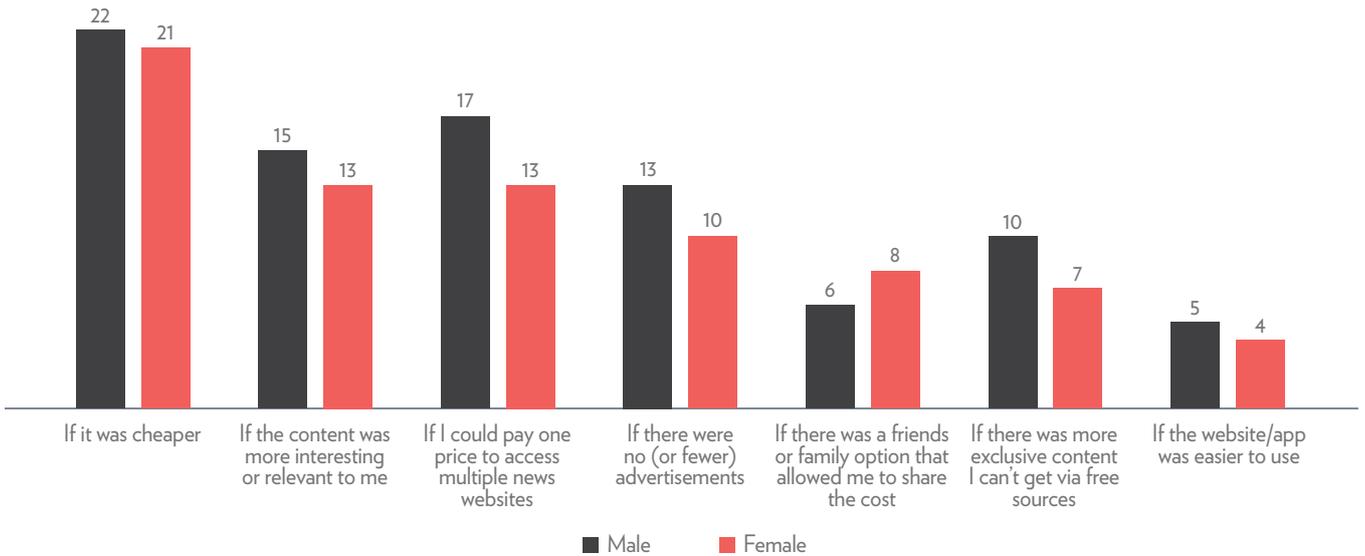
U35		35+	
Female	Male	Female	Male
Better quality than I can get from free sources (40%)	Better quality than I can get from free sources (38%)	Better quality than I can get from free sources (33%)	Better quality than I can get from free sources (52%)
Easy to use website/app (35%)	I want to help fund good journalism (38%)	Easy to use website/app (33%)	Easy to use website/app (43%)
I was offered a good deal/trial (35%)	Non-news features (cooking, culture, etc.) (38%)	Exclusive or distinctive content I can't get anywhere else (30%)	Particular journalists that I like (35%)
			I want to help fund good journalism (35%)

WOMEN ARE SLIGHTLY MORE INCLINED TO PAY FOR NEWS IF THEY CAN SHARE THE COST WITH FRIENDS OR FAMILY

We asked those who don't pay for news what might encourage them to pay. Women are less likely than men to be motivated to pay for news generally, but they are slightly more likely than men to say they would pay for it if there

was an option that allowed them to share the cost with friends or family. Around one in five non-paying women (21%) and men (22%) say they would pay for online news if it was cheaper (see **figure 1.26**).

FIGURE 1.26: INCENTIVES TO PAY AMONG NON-NEWS PAYERS (%)

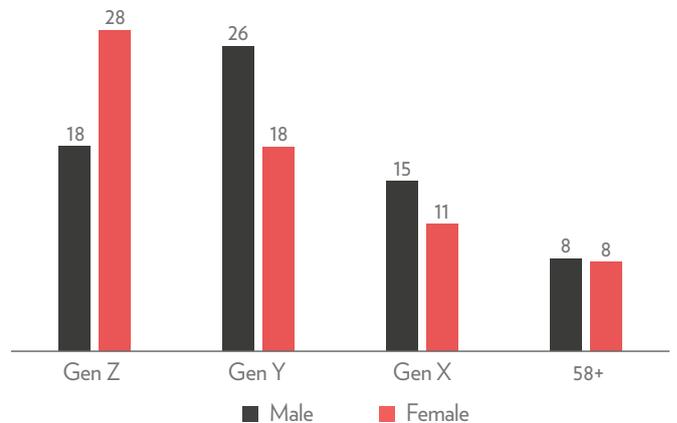


[Q4_Pay_2023] You say you _don't currently subscribe or donate_ to an online newspaper or other news service. Which of the following, if any, would most encourage you to pay? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=1,513]

MORE THAN A QUARTER OF GEN Z WOMEN SAY THEY ARE WILLING TO PAY FOR NEWS THAT IS RELEVANT TO THEM

For young women, relevance of news seems to be a key motivator to pay for it (see **figure 1.27**). More than a quarter (28%) of Gen Z women say they would be willing to pay for online news that is relevant to them. In contrast, only 18% of Gen Z men say relevance is an important driver to pay for online news. This possibly reflects that women are much more likely to feel unrepresented by the news and less interested in hard and negative news that tends to dominate.

FIGURE 1.27: PROPORTION OF NON-PAYERS WHO SAY 'RELEVANT CONTENT' WOULD ENCOURAGE THEM TO PAY FOR ONLINE NEWS BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)



COMMENTARY

WOMEN'S DISINTEREST IN NEWS IS LINKED TO LACK OF REPRESENTATION AND INCLUSIVITY IN AUSTRALIAN MEDIA

Petra Buchanan, Non-executive Director and Strategic Advisor, *Women in Media Australia*

WHY SHOULD WOMEN BE INTERESTED IN NEWS IF IT'S NOT BEING CREATED FOR THEM? AND IT'S NOT REPRESENTATIVE OF THEM?

This report on women's news consumption trends in Australia underscores the persistent gender disparities that exist in media consumption habits. The findings offer valuable insights into the evolving media landscape, where women are increasingly drawn to niche, targeted content that aligns with their interests, while distancing themselves from mainstream news. This report emphasises the necessity of tailoring content, tone, and perspective, to effectively engage women and foster a gender-balanced, more inclusive media landscape in Australia.

UNDERSTANDING MEDIA CONSUMPTION TRENDS

The report highlights media consumption patterns are influenced by a myriad of factors, including generational divides, regional disparities, and the shift towards social content over traditional news platforms. However, rather than merely noting the gender gap, it is crucial to ask: why should women be interested in news if it's not being created for them? And it's not representative of them?

People naturally gravitate towards stories that feel relevant, positive, and connected to their communities. This sense of belonging is essential for a well-functioning society and democracy. The data reveals that women consume news less frequently than men, with 39% of women categorised as light news consumers compared to 57% of men. This gender gap is more pronounced in Australia than globally, with a 19 percentage point difference between men and women. Gen Z women, in particular, emerge as the lightest news consumers, highlighting the generational impact on this disparity.

While there is no substantial difference in the use of TV news bulletins, women are notably less likely to visit news sites or apps of mainstream news outlets, such as newspapers, news magazines, TV, and radio. This pronounced gender gap in the use of online news websites/apps in Australia (13 percentage points) surpasses the global average (6 percentage points).

However, despite lower overall interest in news, women are more likely to use social media as a source of news, with 48% of women using social media for news compared to 42% of men. This gap widens when social media becomes the primary news source, with 27% of women relying on social media, compared to only 16% of men. This also highlights differences in content preferences, as women tend to gravitate towards entertainment, celebrity, lifestyle, and health news, while their interest in sports, politics, and business news is lower.

THE INFLUENCE OF MEDIA REPRESENTATION

It is crucial to recognise that women's disinterest in consuming news media may be linked to the lack of representation and inclusivity in Australian media. The Women in Media Gender Scorecard, released earlier this year, shows today's Australian media is mainly written, presented and inclusive of commentary by men. It's made for and by men, and therefore attracts men. It's as if we are just now realising that women are drawn to different topics, interests and ideas and that we are therefore interested in seeing, hearing and creating stories through the prism of a balanced gender perspective. The lack of female representation in Australian media raises questions about the content's relevance to women and their consequent disengagement from news.

The scorecard, published by Women in Media, a 6,000-member organisation for women working in various media fields, analysed nearly 20,000 press, radio, and TV news reports over a 14-day period. While there has been an 8-point improvement in gender parity since 2016, achieving true gender parity in media will take until 2034 at the current rate, an unacceptable delay.

THE GENDER DISPARITY IN SPORTS MEDIA

One glaring example of gender disparity is in sports media, where men overwhelmingly dominate as authors, sources, and experts. According to the Women in Media Gender Scorecard, men represent 82% of authors, 84% of sources, and a staggering 90% of experts in sports stories. This imbalance not only affects sports coverage but also reflects broader gender disparities in media.

Sports media accounts for almost one-quarter of all media bylines in Australia, making it the most frequent topic, yet only 18% of sports stories are written by women. Only 16% of quotes in sports stories are from women, and a mere 10% of experts featured in sports stories are women. This disparity in sports media is not only a reflection of gender inequality, but also a missed opportunity to engage women in news consumption.

The FIFA Women's World Cup 2023 serves as a recent example of the potential for change. The event shattered records and demonstrated a significant shift in viewership, driven by women's sports and a female-driven audience. This highlights the importance of media representation in reshaping societal perceptions and attitudes towards gender.

ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES

To bridge the gender gap in media consumption, we must address the root causes of gender inequality in the media industry. Australia's media sector wields significant influence in shaping societal perceptions and attitudes towards gender. Yet, women in the media industry continue to grapple with underrepresentation, misrepresentation, and invisibility.

While women have been the majority of graduates in journalism, marketing, and communications since the 1980s, the gender imbalance persists in the workplace and career development. Workplace Gender Equality Agency data reveals that women comprise only 38.2% of the workforce in the Information Media and Telecommunications sector, with a 16% gender pay gap, above the national average.

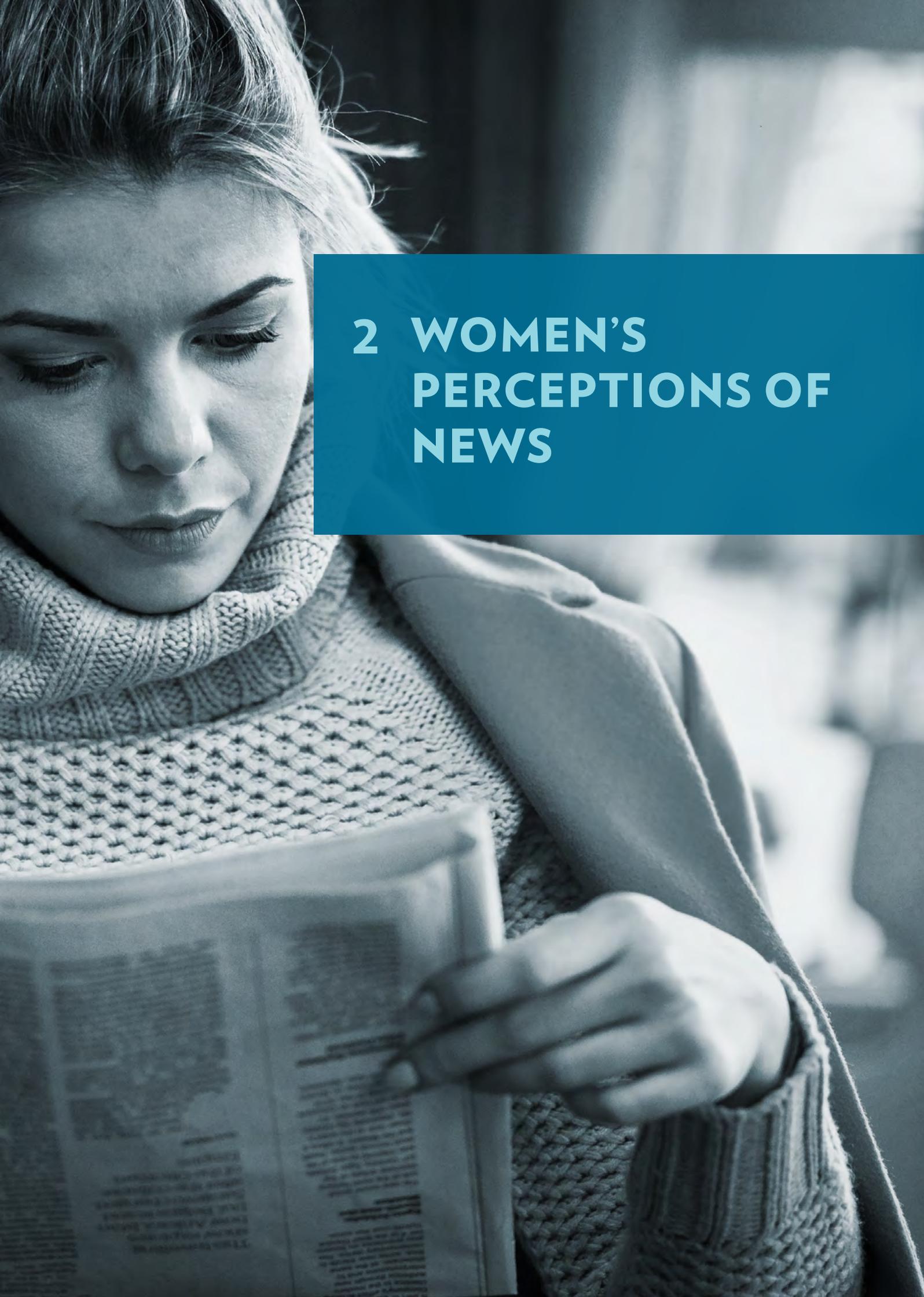
Furthermore, women hold a mere 20.5% of C-Suite positions in media categories, while their representation in management positions stands at 37.9%. Pause for a minute to reflect on media leadership; we can count on one hand the women who are leading media companies in Australia. These figures underscore the urgent need to address gender equality issues within the media industry so that more women can grow within the media ranks into leadership. Women's professional growth in the media industry can directly impact gender perceptions in society.

A CALL TO ACTION

To rectify these disparities and create a more inclusive media landscape, Women in Media supports the following actions:

- Industry and organisations should develop female sources and experts as media representatives. This includes reviewing and assessing levels of female representation, investing in training and development for spokeswomen, and committing to monitor change.
- Media organisations should commit to increasing female bylines to equal gender percentages of the population (50/50).
- The media should address gender imbalances in the most prolific areas of coverage, including sport, finance, health, and politics.
- Media organisations should focus on gender balance in news and reporting, by promoting inclusion and diversity in content development and ensuring workplaces support and provide visibility for women, offering pathways to leadership positions.

By ensuring greater female representation at all levels of media leadership, production, and consumption, we can create a more inclusive, equitable, and accurate representation in the media of Australian society. This shift to a more inclusive media, that has gender balance at its core, has the power to meet women where their interests, voice and perspectives align. Bridging the gender gap in media consumption requires recognising women's diverse interests, encouraging their active engagement with current affairs, and working towards equitable representation of women in the media industry. Only then can we hope to create a truly informed and equitable society where everyone's voice is heard and valued.

A black and white photograph of a woman with her hair tied back, wearing a thick, textured knit turtleneck sweater. She is looking down intently at a newspaper she is holding open with both hands. The background is blurred, showing other people in a public space. A teal-colored rectangular box is overlaid on the right side of the image, containing the title text in white.

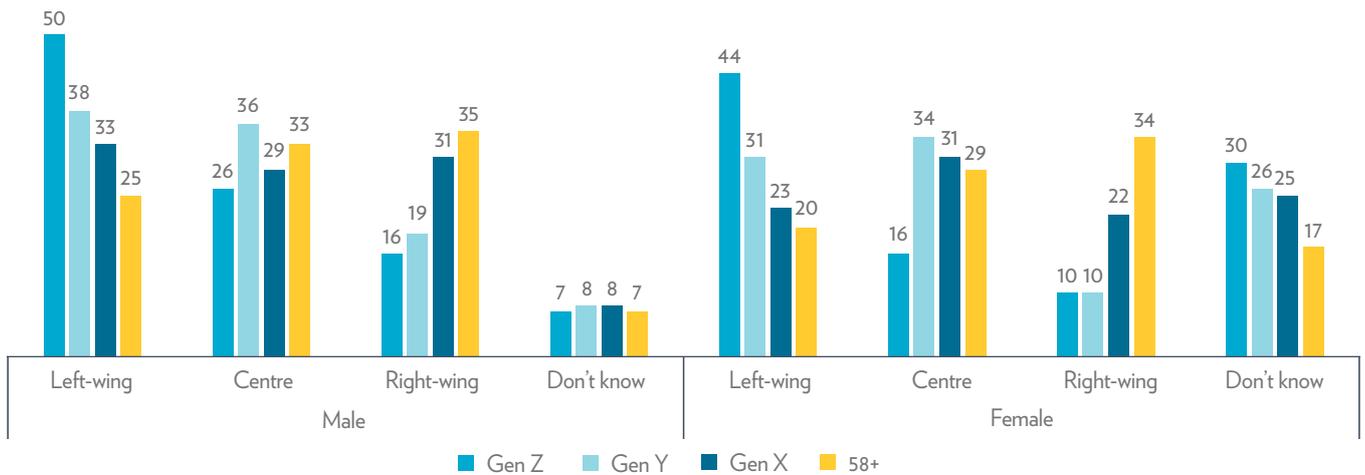
2 WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF NEWS

WOMEN ARE LESS CERTAIN OF THEIR POLITICAL ORIENTATION THAN MEN

Women consistently express a higher level of uncertainty about their political orientation compared to men (see **figure 2.1**). This uncertainty is evident across all generational cohorts, with almost one-quarter (23%) of female respondents selecting the 'don't know' option when asked about their political alignment, in contrast to only 7% of males. This pattern underscores a possible gender disparity in confidence or clarity regarding political preferences and

is particularly pronounced among younger generations. Thirty percent of Gen Z women express uncertainty about their political orientation. As individuals age, the disparity in political certainty gradually diminishes. Notably, women in the 58 or older cohort are more confident in stating their political orientation than younger women. These findings also reflect that women tend to have lower levels of interest in both politics and political news than men.

FIGURE 2.1: POLITICAL ORIENTATION BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)



[Q1F] Some people talk about 'left', 'right' and 'centre' to describe parties and politicians. (Generally, socialist parties would be considered 'left wing' whilst conservative parties would be considered 'right wing'). With this in mind, where would you place yourself on the following scale? [Base: N=2025]

GENDER DISPARITY IN POLITICAL INTEREST

In 2023, we asked respondents how interested they are in politics. Only one-fifth (22%) of women say they are highly interested in politics compared to almost half of men (49%). As **figure 2.2** shows, this gender gap in political interest can be seen across all generations. This disparity is most pronounced among Generations Z, Y, and X, where the levels of political interest among male respondents are substantially higher than their female counterparts. In particular, Gen Y men are almost three times more interested in politics (57%) than Gen Y women (20%). However, the gender gap in levels of high political interest narrows with age. Among people aged 58 or older, the proportion of women who say they are highly interested in politics increases slightly (24%) while the proportion of highly interested men falls (38%).

FIGURE 2.2: INTEREST IN POLITICS BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)



[Q2_new2018] How interested, if at all, would you say you are in politics? [Base: N=2025]

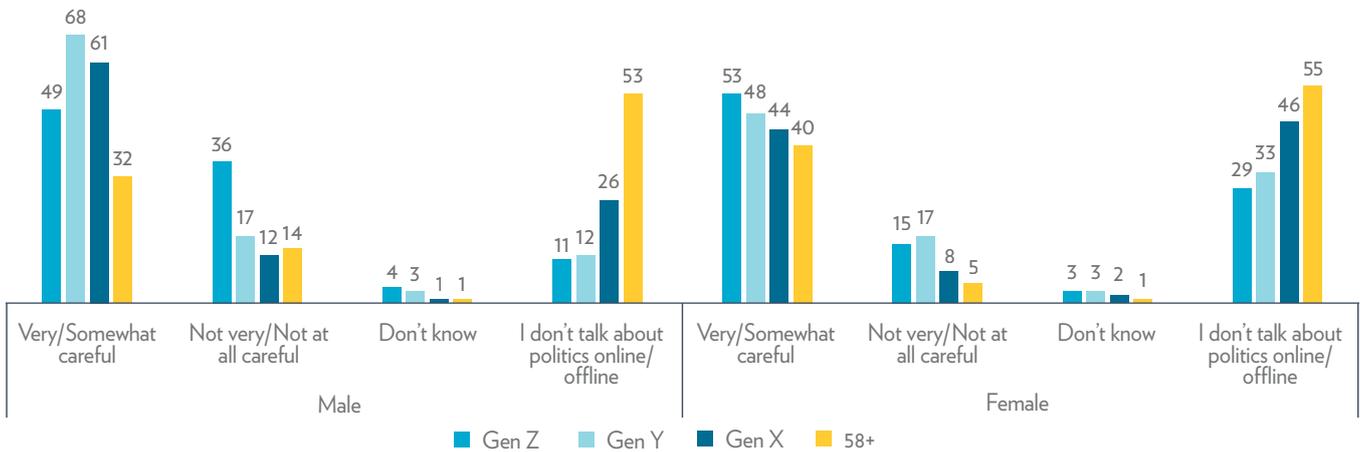
WOMEN ARE LESS ENGAGED IN POLITICAL DISCUSSION ONLINE AND OFFLINE

Women are less likely than men to participate in political discussions, both online and offline. Forty-four percent of women say they do not talk about politics online compared to 29% of men. This partly reflects that men are more interested in politics than women and therefore are more likely to engage in political discussion generally. As **figure 2.3** shows, the difference between men and women is consistent across generations, except among 58 or older, where both men (53%) and women (55%) are almost as equally likely not to discuss politics online.

The examination of gender differences in reluctance to engage in online political discussions reveals distinct trends across generational cohorts (see **figure 2.3**). Within Gen

Z, young women exhibit a slightly higher degree of caution than men. Notably, Gen Z males are the least cautious group when it comes to discussing politics online (36%), in contrast to only 15% of Gen Z females who share this sentiment. The data also highlights a significant gender disparity within Gen Y, with 68% of males expressing caution compared to 48% of females. This higher level of caution among Gen Y men is likely a reflection of their higher level of engagement. Fewer women say they are cautious about talking politics online because fewer women discuss politics in general. However, both 58 or older men (53%) and women (55%) are almost as likely to say they don't talk about politics in online spaces.

FIGURE 2.3: CARE WHEN TALKING ABOUT POLITICS ONLINE BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)



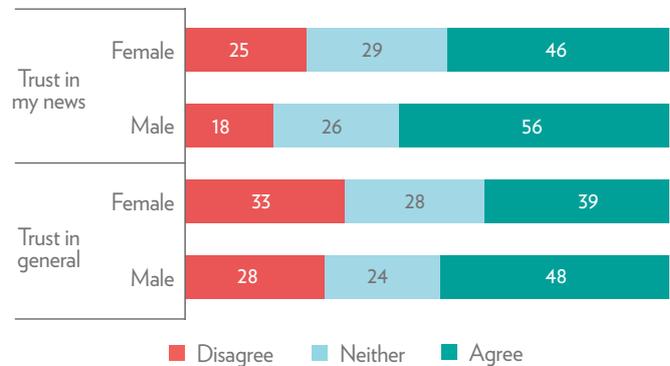
[Q2_Participation_2023] When talking about politics with people _online_ (e.g. via social networks or messaging groups), how careful do you feel you have to be with what you say? [Base: N=2025]

WOMEN TRUST NEWS LESS THAN MEN

We asked participants whether they trust the news in general and the news they personally use. Overall, women have lower trust in news than men (see **figure 2.4**). Fewer women (46%) than men (56%) agree that they can trust the news they consume most of the time, and even fewer women (39%) than men (48%) say they trust the news in Australia generally. While trust in news among men increased in 2023, women's trust in news fell by three percentage points, creating a nine percentage point gendered trust gap compared to 2022.

The gender gap in trust in news has widened substantially over the last few years. While there was no gender gap (F 44%; M 43%) in 2016, the difference has grown to a nine percentage point in 2023.

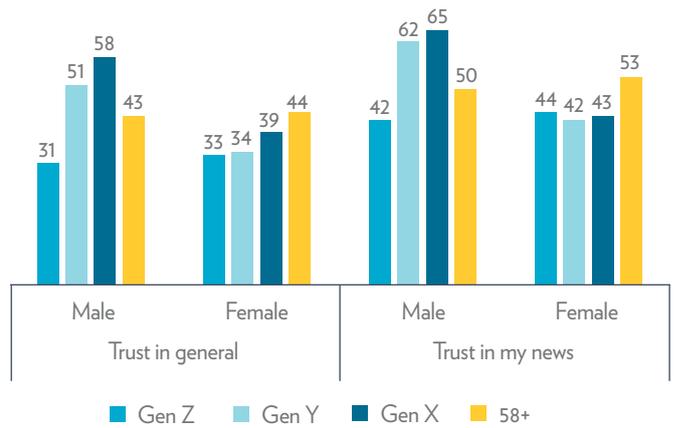
FIGURE 2.4: TRUST IN NEWS (%)



[Q6_2016] 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 - I think you can trust most news most of the time [Base: N=2,025]

While men have higher levels of trust in news than women overall, there are differences based on generation. **Figure 2.5** shows that both Gen Z and women aged 58 or older are slightly more likely than their male counterparts to say they trust the news. 58 or older women are the most likely to trust news, with 44% trusting news generally and more than half trusting the news they consume (53%), whereas 43% of 58 or older men trust news generally and half trust their news. Interestingly, the greatest gender gaps appear within Generations X and Y. Almost two-thirds of Gen X men (65%) say they trust the news they use compared to 43% of Gen X women; and 58% of Gen X men say they trust most news most of the time compared to 39% of Gen X women. Similar gaps can be seen between Generation Y men and women.

FIGURE 2.5: TRUST IN NEWS BY GENDER AND GENERATION (% THOSE WHO AGREE)



The data highlight the complex range of factors that contribute to the gendered nature of trust in news. The data tell us the more news you consume, the more likely you are

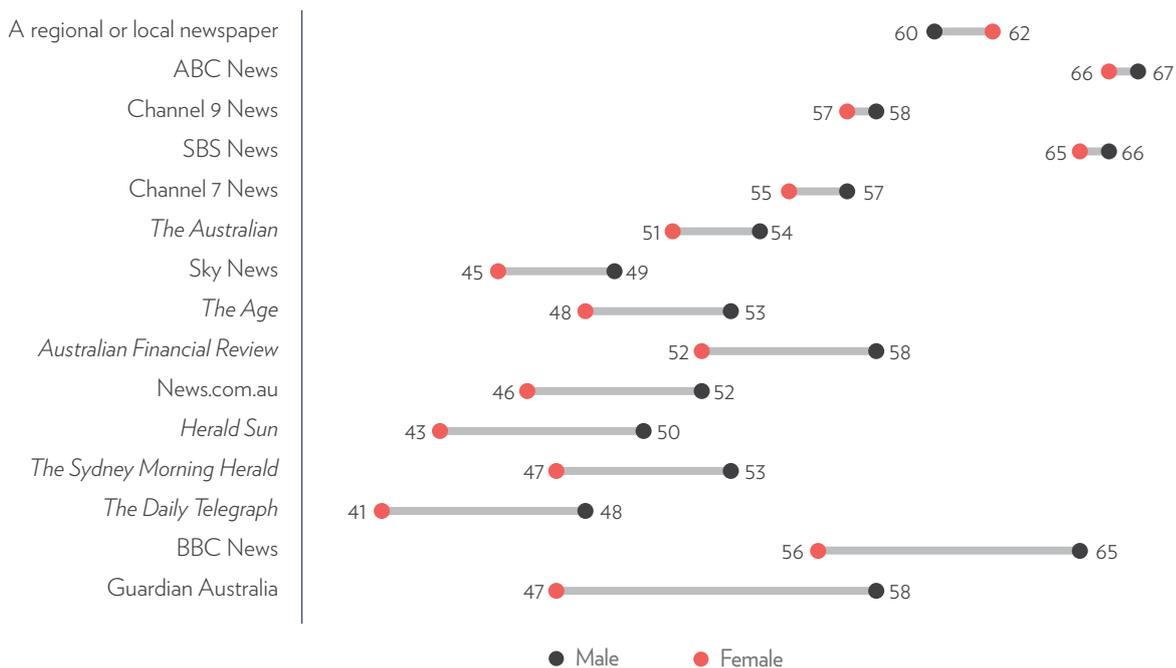
to trust it; and the more the news represents you and your interests, the more likely you will trust it. As a result, both younger people and women tend to trust news less.

WOMEN HAVE LOWER TRUST IN CERTAIN NEWS BRANDS THAN MEN

Women exhibit a lower level of trust in specific news outlets than men. We asked respondents about their level of trust in a number of major news brands. As **figure 2.6** shows, across almost all news brands, women have a lower level of trust than men. The exception being regional or local newspapers, where women’s trust is fractionally higher (62%) than men’s (60%). TV news services typically have a smaller gender gap in terms of trust. These similar levels

of trust may be attributed to the fact that TV remains the most popular and most trusted source of news in Australia. The biggest gender gap in brand trust is observed with Guardian Australia, where fewer women say they trust it (47%) than men (58%). This possibly reflects that the women in the survey use the Guardian Australia less (6%) than the male respondents (14%).

FIGURE 2.6: TRUST IN NEWS BRANDS (% THOSE WHO TRUST)



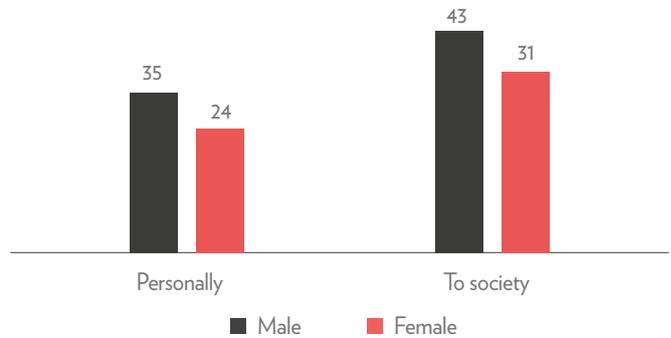
[Q6_2018_trust] How trustworthy would you say news from the following brands is? Please use the scale below, where 0 - 4 is 'not trustworthy'; 5 is 'Neither'; 6 - 10 is 'Trustworthy'. (Base: N= 2025)

WOMEN ARE LESS LIKELY TO VALUE PUBLICLY FUNDED NEWS SERVICES THAN MEN

In 2023 we asked survey participants about publicly funded news services, like the ABC and SBS, and how important they are to society and to people individually. The data suggest that the less you use a news service, the less important it is likely to be to you. As shown in the **figure 1.7 (Chapter 1)**, women’s viewership of public TV news in Australia is lower than men’s (ABC TV F 24%; M 29%; SBS F 9%; M 15%). Similarly, less than one-quarter of women (24%) say publicly funded news services are very important to them personally compared to 35% of men, and less than one-third of women (31%) say publicly funded news services are very important to society compared to 43% of men.

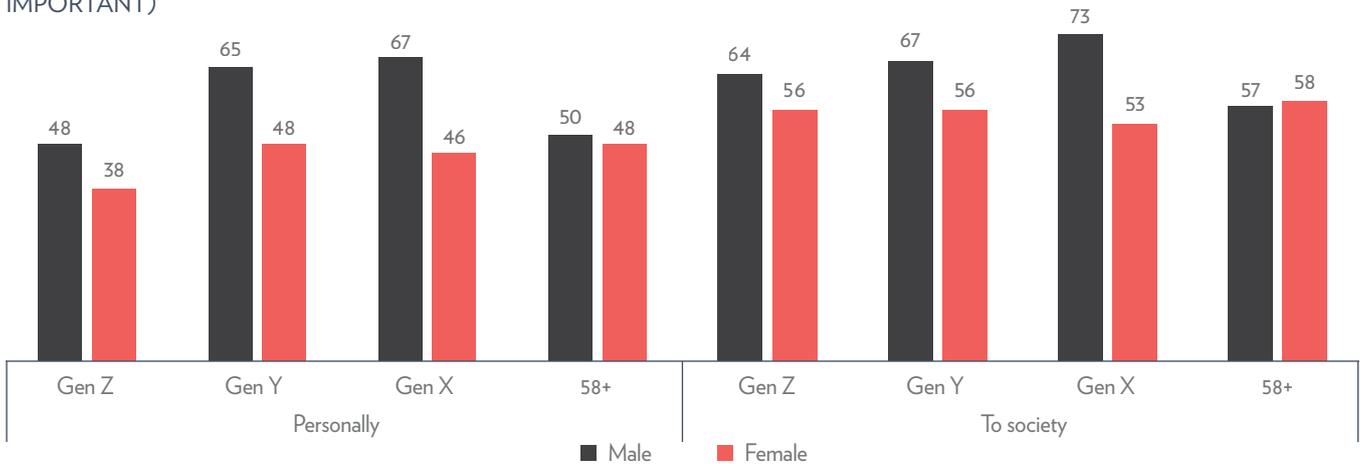
As shown above, Australian women generally regard publicly funded news services as less important than men. Generation Y and women aged 58 or older place the greatest importance on publicly funded news services to themselves personally (48%; 48%). As **figure 2.8** highlights, the largest proportion of female support only matches the lowest level of male endorsement.

FIGURE 2.7: PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLICLY FUNDED NEWS SERVICES (PERSONALLY AND TO SOCIETY) (% OF VERY IMPORTANT)



[Q1_PSM_2023G] how important, or not, are publicly funded news services such as to you personally? in your opinion, how important, or not, are publicly funded news services such as to society...? (Base: N=2025)

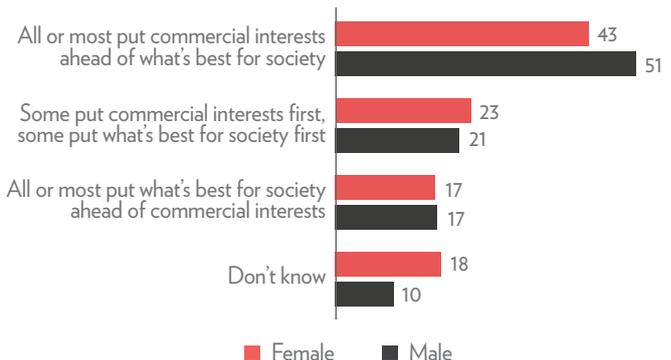
FIGURE 2.8: PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLICLY FUNDED NEWS SERVICES BY GENDER AND GENERATION (% OF VERY/QUITE IMPORTANT)



MEN ARE MORE CYNICAL ABOUT NEWS ORGANISATIONS THAN WOMEN

The perception of certain issues may be influenced by gendered views on the trustworthiness of news organisations as sources of information. As such, we asked respondents their views on the priorities of commercial news. Men (51%) are more likely than women (43%) to say that news organisations put their commercial interests ahead of what is best for society. An equal percentage of women (17%) and men (17%) say news organisations put what is best for society ahead of commercial interests, but women (18%) are more likely to say they ‘don’t know’.

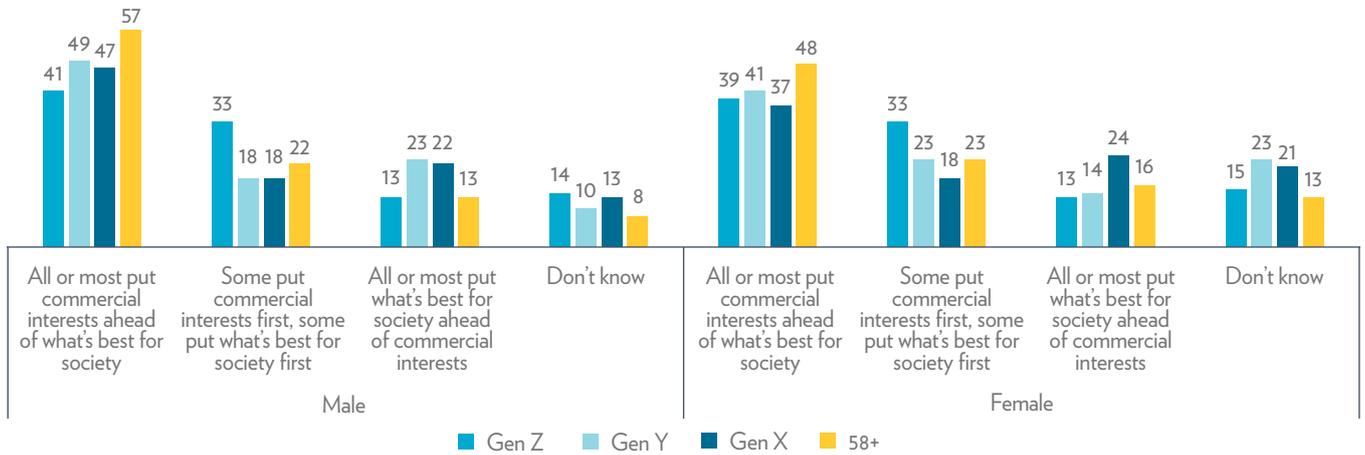
FIGURE 2.9: NEWS ORGANISATIONS’ PRIORITIES ON COMMERCIAL INTEREST 2022 (%)



Older audiences are more likely to say news organisations put their commercial interests ahead of the public interest. Between the genders, Gen Y women (14%) are less likely than Gen Y men (23%) to say that news organisations put

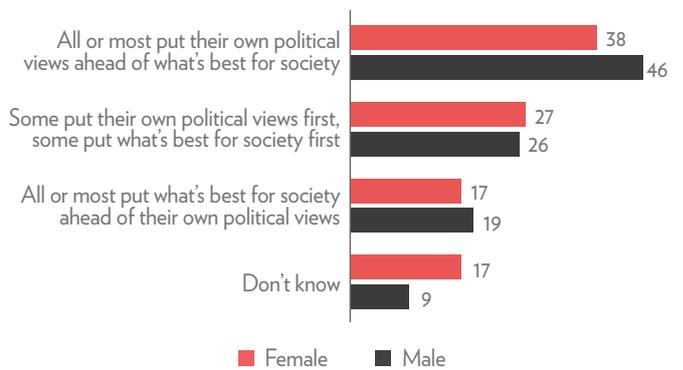
the needs of society first. Women in Gen Y (23%) are also more likely to say they don't know compared to Gen Y men (10%).

FIGURE 2.10: BELIEF IN NEWS ORGANISATIONS' PRIORITIES ON COMMERCIAL INTEREST 2022 BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)



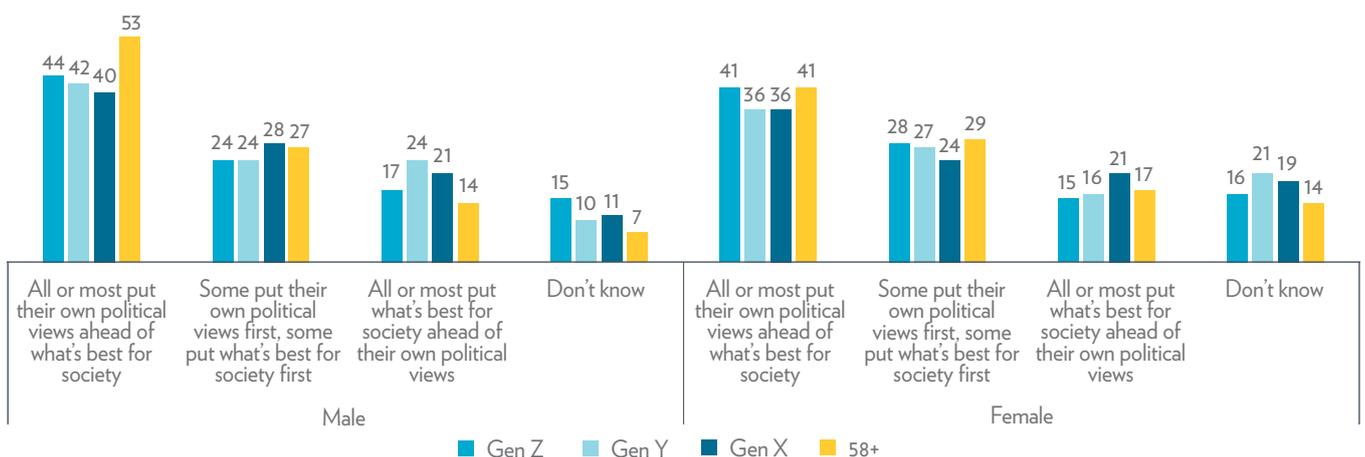
Men are also more cynical about news organisations' political priorities. While 38% of women say that news organisations put their own political interests ahead of what is best for society, 46% of men say the same (see **figure 2.11**). Again, women (17%) are much more likely to say they don't have an opinion on this issue compared to men (9%).

FIGURE 2.11: BELIEF IN NEWS ORGANISATIONS' PRIORITIES ON POLITICAL INTEREST (%)



Women who are 58 or older (41%) are less likely than men in the same generation (53%) to say that news organisations put their own political views ahead of what is best for society (see **figure 2.12**). While men and women in Gen Z are fairly aligned, men in Gen Y (24%) are much more likely to say news organisations put what is best for society ahead of their political views, compared to women in Gen Y (16%).

FIGURE 2.12: BELIEF IN NEWS ORGANISATIONS' PRIORITIES ON POLITICAL INTEREST BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)

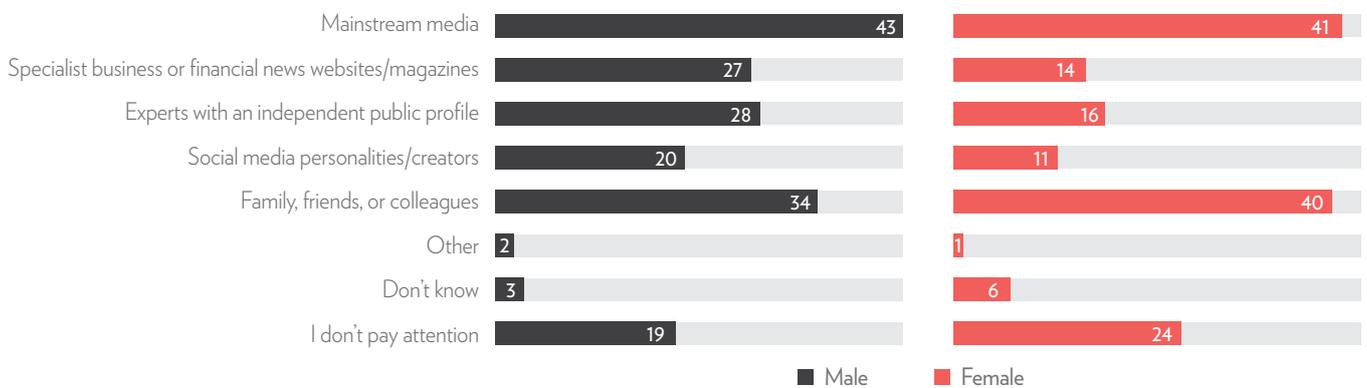


WOMEN ARE LESS ENGAGED WITH FINANCE AND ECONOMIC NEWS THAN MEN

In the context of the global financial downturn, we sought to understand more about how audiences respond to economic and finance news. **Figure 2.13** reveals significant gender differences. While Australian men (43%) and women (41%) both strongly rely on mainstream media sources for economic news, they have very different preferences for other information sources about the economy. Women rely more on family, friends or colleagues for finance news and information (40%) than men (34%). Fewer women (14%) engage with specialist business or

financial news websites/magazines in comparison to their male counterparts (27%). Likewise, only 11% of women use social media personalities/creators as sources of finance news and information, whereas almost twice as many men do so (20%). More women than men also admit to not paying attention to where they source finance news and information from (F 24%; M 19%). Overall, this data reflects that women are less interested in news about the economy than men.

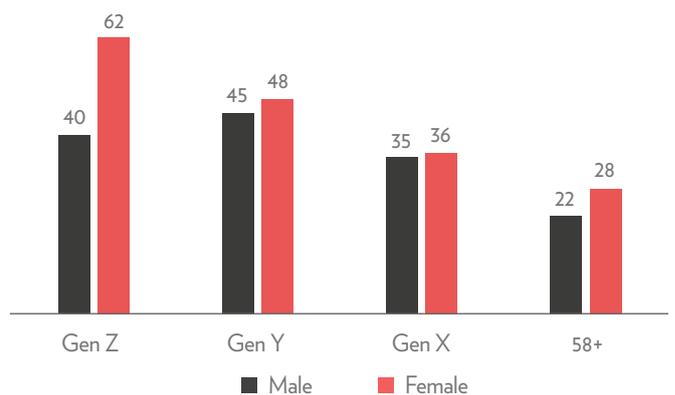
FIGURE 2.13: SOURCES OF FINANCE NEWS AND INFORMATION (%)



[Q2_FINANCE_2023M] thinking about news or information related to _your personal finances and/or the wider economy, which of the following sources, if any, do you pay a lot of attention to? please select all that apply. (Base: N= 2025)

More women than men rely on family, friends or colleagues as sources of finance news and information about the economy. This tendency is much more pronounced among Gen Z women, with nearly two-thirds (62%) saying they use family, friends or colleagues as their source of finance news (see **figure 2.14**). In contrast, only 40% of Gen Z men turn to their personal networks to get finance news. However, the proportion of women relying on their friends and family to be informed about the economy is smaller among older generations. Yet even so, this data indicates more than one-third of Gen X women and more than one-quarter of women aged 58 or older still use this method to source news, again reflecting their overall lower interest in economic news.

FIGURE 2.14: RELY ON FAMILY, FRIENDS, OR COLLEAGUES FOR FINANCE NEWS AND INFORMATION BY GENERATION (%)

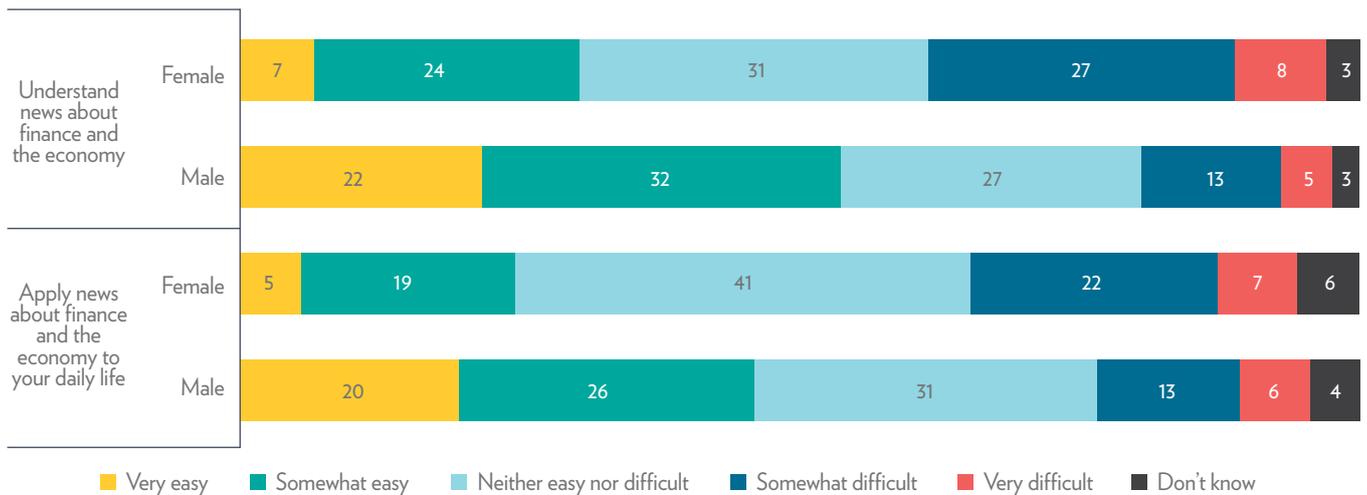


WOMEN FIND ECONOMIC NEWS HARD TO UNDERSTAND

Concerningly, significantly fewer women than men say they understand news about finance and the economy or know how to apply finance and economic news to their daily lives. **Figure 2.15** highlights that more than one-fifth of men (22%) find finance news very easy to understand, and a further 20% of men say they can easily apply this type of news to their daily lives. However, women are more

than three times less likely than men (7%) to find finance and economic news very easy to understand and are four times less likely (5%) than men to be able to apply this news to their everyday lives. This data reveals that women are significantly less confident in their knowledge of finance news and how to apply it to their daily lives than men.

FIGURE 2.15: UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING NEWS ABOUT FINANCE AND THE ECONOMY (%)

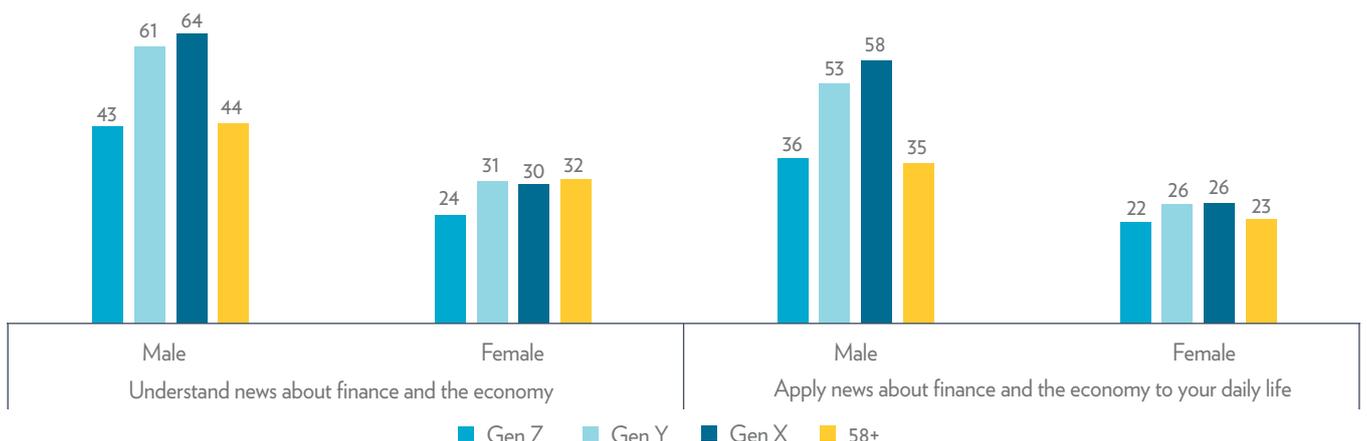


[Q3_Finance_2023] How easy or difficult do you find it to _understand_ news about finance and the economy? How easy or difficult do you find it to _apply_ news about finance and the economy _to your daily life? (Base: N= 2025)

Across all demographics, male news consumers feel more confident understanding finance news and applying it to their lives. Gen Y and Gen X have the largest gender disparities in understanding and applying finance news. There is a 30 percentage point difference between Gen Y men (61%) and women (31%) in understanding finance news, and a 34 percentage point difference between Gen X men (64%) and women (30%) (see **figure 2.16**). These gendered trends are echoed in relation to people's ability

to apply finance news to their daily lives, with 58% of Gen X men feeling confident to use the information compared to 26% of Gen X women. Out of all generations, Gen Z women show the lowest tendency to engage with finance news. Less than one-quarter of Gen Z women (24%) feel they understand news about finance and the economy, and only 22% feel they can apply news about finance and the economy to their daily lives.

FIGURE 2.16: NEWS ABOUT FINANCE IS VERY OR SOMEWHAT EASY TO UNDERSTAND AND APPLY TO THEIR DAILY LIVES BY BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)



COMMENTARY

CHANGING WOMEN'S INTEREST IN NEWS REQUIRES BREAKING DOWN ARBITRARY LINES BETWEEN 'MALE' AND 'FEMALE' AREAS OF COVERAGE

Dr. Craig T. Robertson, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford
Dr. Amy Ross Arguedas, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University of Oxford

WOMEN AND POLITICS

Many of the gender gaps we see in perceptions of news are intertwined with pervasive (perceived) gender roles in social life more generally, especially in relation to politics. If we look back at just modern history, we can see how politics has tended to exclude women and be coveted by men as a male domain. This creates a perception – one that arguably still lingers – that politics is male. Australian women only received the right to vote at the beginning of the 20th century (excluding some Indigenous women for several decades more), and since then there has been only one female prime minister. While there is gender parity in the Australian Senate, the House of Representatives remains overwhelmingly male. These facts indicate how politics has been controlled by men – and branded as a male domain, associated with traits read as stereotypically “masculine”, such as dominance and assertiveness.

Such things matter for how politics is seen, playing a role in whether women feel they are part of it, able to participate, or even welcome in the political domain. If politics is seen as exclusionary, women are likely to be less interested in or engaged with it. This is reflected in the data on women's certainty in their political orientation, their political interest, and their political discussion tendencies. If the world of politics tells you it's not for you, you may consequently be less interested in it, less engaged, and less sure of where you stand.

Research in political science has pointed to a variety of ways in which gendered socialisation, from very early on (see Fraile & Sánchez-Vítores, 2020), can shape not only gaps between men and women over time in terms of political interest and discussion, but also what they consider to be “politics” in the first place and the kinds of political issues they are more interested in. For instance, men tend to be more interested in political actors, institutions, and conflict over resources, whereas women are more often interested in issues affecting them directly (e.g., the gender pay gap, abortion, gender-based violence) and social policies (Ferrín et al., 2020). Changing interest in and perceptions around these issues requires a fundamental breaking down arbitrary lines between ‘male’ or ‘female’ domains.

WOMEN AND NEWS

Just like the world of politics, news and newsrooms have been historically gendered. This is typified in the image of the ‘Boys on the Bus’ (Crouse, 1973) – those political reporters who follow candidates on the campaign trail, ask them the tough questions, and drink in the bar together. That book was published in 1973, but this ‘boys club’ dynamic has been documented in research in the internet age (see Usher et al., 2018; Topić & Bruegmann, 2021). It is thus unsurprising that news has often excluded or marginalised women and their perspectives. It's not always seen to represent or be ‘for’ them.

This is not an historical problem that we've ‘solved’ – it's ongoing. To this day, many newsrooms lack female representation in leadership roles (see Eddy et al., 2023), despite the abundance of female reporters and women in other roles (not to mention in classrooms at communications schools). While diversifying the journalistic workforce is an important step, without change among decision-makers, shifts in organizational routines and news outputs will likely remain limited (Ross, 2001). Representation in the newsroom matters for how the news is perceived by the public – and whether women are represented in the news (Shor et al., 2015). If news is seen as exclusionary or irrelevant to them, women will likely be less interested in news and value it less.

Societal factors also play important roles in how women think about and consume news. Research has shown, for example, how news consumption can be shaped by perceptions that news—like politics—is for men (Toff & Palmer, 2019). Many people who grew up watching the men in their families actively discuss current affairs, while women avoided such topics or only listened, will replicate these roles as adults. Furthermore, gender-based divisions of labour in the household may lead women to shoulder a heavier load of caretaking work, in turn shaping the time and energy available for news consumption (Toff & Palmer, 2019).

Newsrooms and their coverage can also reflect and reinforce the historical gendering of specific news topics. Beyond politics, two of the most gendered areas of news

coverage have been sports and business/finance, which are often seen as “male”. For example, at an industry conference in London this year, a researcher doing work on the brand image of the *Financial Times* talked about asking audiences to describe what the FT would look like if it were a person. The descriptions that came back, she said, were generally along these lines: An older white man in a suit and boiler hat. The editor of the *Financial Times* is a woman – Roula Khalaf – but this doesn't stop people from thinking of the newspaper as a wealthy older white man.

Gender gaps in how audience perceive specific news topics may also arise from social factors beyond newsrooms and journalism. For example, scholarship has documented persistent gender differences in financial literacy (Tinghög et al., 2021), which likely shape different feelings about the comprehensibility of finance coverage. However, news organisations can also magnify, perpetuate, or simply fail to address those gaps through their organisational practices (e.g., who gets assigned to report what topics), style of coverage, or even their branding.

Finally, when it comes to trust, what is typically found to be a necessary precursor for trust is being familiar with or using something. If women consume less news, or engage with it less frequently, they are likely to end up expressing lower trust precisely because they have less familiarity. Or, as with political orientation, they may be more unsure about their opinion for the same reasons. Beyond this, women have often been made to feel misunderstood, not taken seriously, ignored, or even exploited in media coverage, which can affect trust (Ross Arguedas et al., 2023).

Crouse, T. (1973). *The Boys on the Bus*. New York: Random House.

Eddy, K., Ross Arguedas, A., Mukherjee, M., Nielsen, R.K. (2023). *Women and leadership in the news media 2023: evidence from 12 markets*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

Ferrín, M., Fraile, M., García-Albacete, G. M., & Gómez, R. (2020). The gender gap in political interest revisited. *International Political Science Review*, 41(4), 473–489. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512119860260>

Fraile, M., & Sánchez Vitores, I. (2020). Tracing the Gender Gap in Political Interest Over the Life Span: A Panel Analysis. *Political Psychology*, 41(1), 89–106. <https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12600>

Ross Arguedas, A., Banerjee, S., Mont'Alverne, C., Toff, B., Fletcher, R., Nielsen, R.K. (2023). *News for the powerful and privileged: how misrepresentation and underrepresentation of disadvantaged communities undermine their trust in news*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

Ross, K. (2001). Women at Work: Journalism as en-gendered practice. *Journalism Studies*, 2(4), 531–544. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700120086404>

Shor, E., Van De Rijt, A., Miltsov, A., Kulkarni, V., & Skiena, S. (2015). A Paper Ceiling: Explaining the Persistent Underrepresentation of Women in Printed News. *American Sociological Review*, 80(5), 960–984. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122415596999>

Tinghög, G., Ahmed, A., Barrafreem, K., Lind, T., Skagerlund, K., & Västfjäll, D. (2021). Gender differences in financial literacy: The role of stereotype threat. *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 192, 405–416. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jebo.2021.10.015>

Toff, B., & Palmer, R. A. (2019). Explaining the Gender Gap in News Avoidance: “News-Is-for-Men” Perceptions and the Burdens of Caretaking. *Journalism Studies*, 20(11), 1563–1579. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2018.1528882>

Topić, M., & Bruegmann, C. (2021). “The Girls at the Desk”: Timeless Blokishness in the Newsroom Culture in the British Press? *Journalism Studies*, 22(1), 77–95. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2020.1854620>

Usher, N., Holcomb, J., & Littman, J. (2018). Twitter Makes It Worse: Political Journalists, Gendered Echo Chambers, and the Amplification of Gender Bias. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 23(3), 324–344. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161218781254>

3 WOMEN'S NEWS ENGAGEMENT

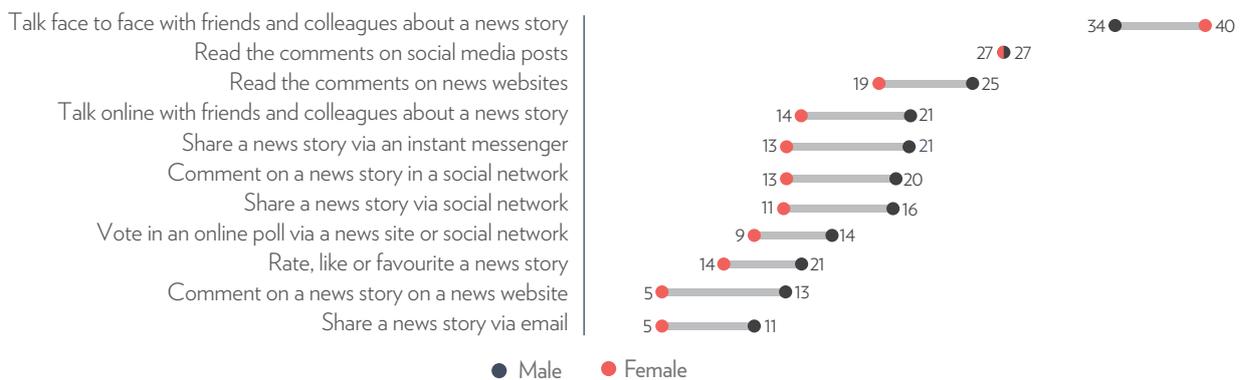


WOMEN PREFER TO TALK ABOUT NEWS FACE TO FACE THAN SHARE, LIKE OR COMMENT ON IT ONLINE

Previous chapters have highlighted that Australian women consume less news than men and are less interested in it. A similar trend can be found when we look at the data about how people interact with online news. **Figure 3.1** shows that women (40%) are more likely to talk to friends and colleagues about a news story face to face than men (34%), but they are less likely to interact with online news than men. Australian women are less likely than men to

read comments on news websites, to share stories on social media, vote in an online poll, like or rate a news story, or comment on an online news story. However, they are just as likely as men to read comments from people on social media posts. This suggests that women are more likely to see news as a topic of social conversation whereas men think of news as something to engage with online.

FIGURE 3.1: WOMEN'S INTERACTIONS IN NEWS BY DEMOGRAPHICS (%)



[Q13] During an average week... in which, if any, of the following ways do you share or participate in news coverage? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=2,025]

WOMEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE 'PASSIVE' THAN 'ACTIVE' ONLINE NEWS CONSUMERS

Overall, the data in this chapter paint a picture of Australian women as passive and disengaged news consumers. These findings reflect a growing global trend of “passive” online news consumption and a decline in “active” online news engagement. The *Reuters Institute Digital News Report*⁷ defines active participators as people who post and comment about news, as opposed to reactive participators, who read, like or share news stories; and passive consumers, who use news but do not participate with it. When averaged across 46 countries, they find only 22% of online news consumers actively engage with the news, marking an

11 percentage point fall since 2018. In contrast, almost half (48%, +5 since 2018) are passive news consumers and 31% are reactive (+6 since 2018). Significantly, active engagers are more likely to be male, highly educated and interested in news, and identify with the left- or right-wing of politics.

Based on this analysis, **figure 3.2** shows Australian women are only half as likely to be “active” online news participants (15%) than men (26%), and more likely to passive or reactive.

FIGURE 3.2: NEWS PARTICIPATION ONLINE (ACTIVE, REACTIVE & PASSIVE) (%)



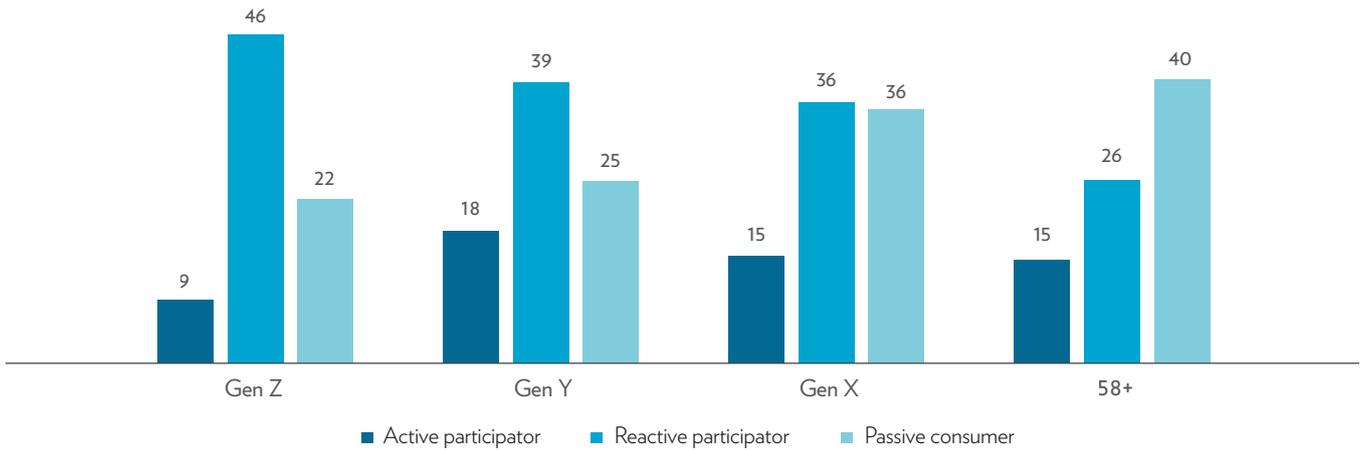
⁷Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Eddy, K., Robertson, C. T., Nielsen, R. K. (2023). *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, Oxford University.

GEN Y WOMEN ARE THE MOST 'ACTIVE'

However, there are differences based on age. As **figure 3.3** reveals, Gen Y women are the most likely among Australian females to be active news engagers who post and comment on the news (18%). In contrast, 40% of women aged 58 or older are likely to be passive online news consumers who read the news but don't engage

with it. Almost half (46%) of young women in Gen Z are reactive participants, who like and share news but don't post and comment on it. These generational differences reflect that Gen Y tend to be heavier news consumers with higher interest in it, whereas Gen Z women are the least interested in news.

FIGURE 3.3: WOMEN'S NEWS PARTICIPATION ONLINE BY GENERATION (%)



WOMEN (72%) ARE MORE LIKELY TO AVOID THE NEWS THAN MEN (67%)

News avoidance in Australia remains high at 69%, which is above the global average (63%). Across the 46 countries surveyed in 2023, women are more likely to avoid the news

than men (F 69%; M 63%). The same is true in Australia with 72% of women saying they avoid the news often, sometimes, or occasionally compared to 67% of men.

OLDER WOMEN ARE MUCH MORE LIKELY TO AVOID NEWS THAN THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS

When we look at the data based on generation and gender, we can see there is little difference between Australian men and women's level of news avoidance across Generations Z, Y and X (see **table 3.1**). The gender divide emerges among those who aged 58 or older, which shows that roughly half of Australian men aged 58 or above avoid the news (53%) compared to 69% of women the same

age. This difference reflects the higher levels of news consumption among men aged 58 or older.

Compared to the global average of the 46 countries surveyed, news avoidance among women in Australia is higher across all generations than it is for men.

TABLE 3.1: NEWS AVOIDANCE BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)

	Australia		Global	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Gen Z	70	70	66	69
Gen Y	77	77	67	71
Gen X	71	73	64	68
58+	53	69	56	66

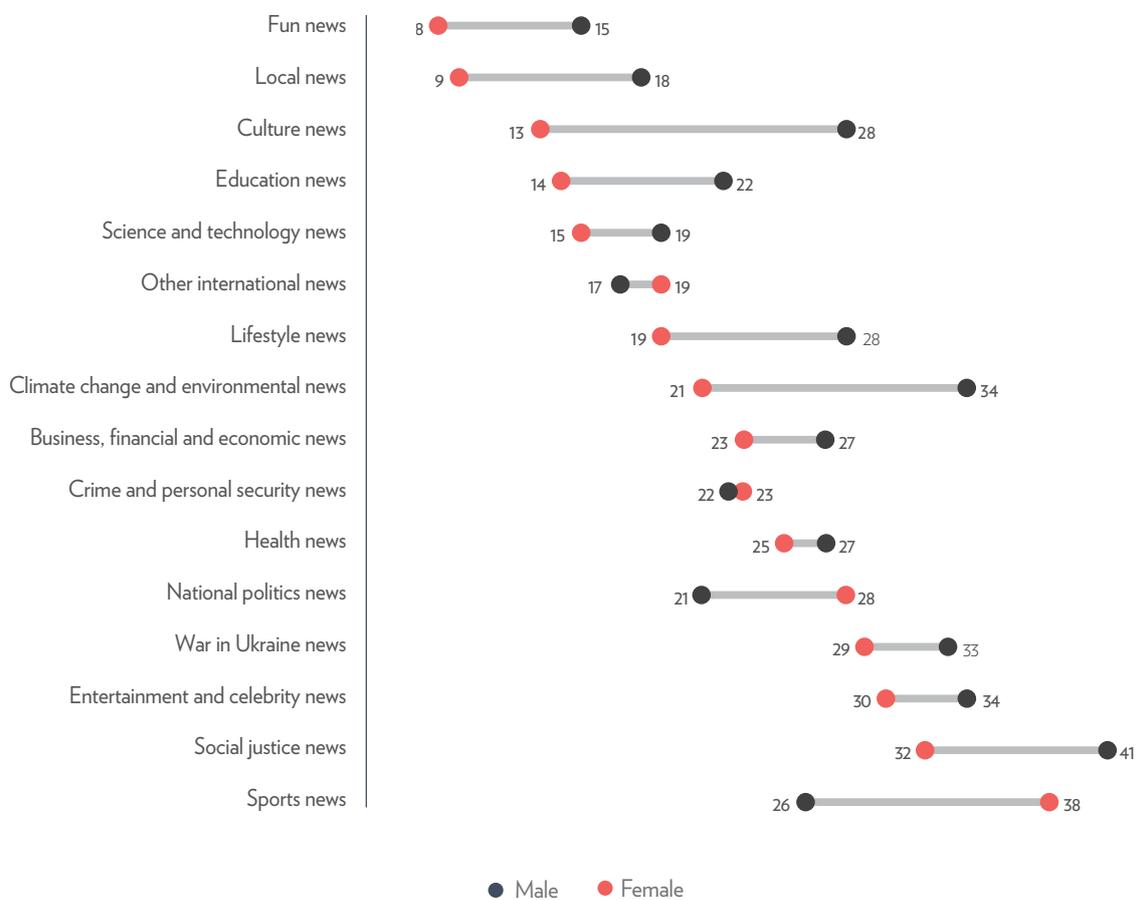
[Q1di_2017] Do you find yourself actively trying to avoid news these days? [Base: N=2,025]

WOMEN ARE MOST LIKELY TO AVOID SPORTS NEWS AND LEAST LIKELY TO AVOID FUN AND LOCAL NEWS

While some people try to avoid the news altogether others are more selective and might choose to avoid particular topics. When we asked about the news topics that people avoid, the data show that women eschew different news topics to men.

Figure 3.4 reveals that women are more likely to avoid news about sport (38%) than men (26%) along with national political news (F 28%; M 21%), and other international news. But they are much less likely than men to avoid news about their local community, culture, lifestyle, climate change and social justice issues. This reflects that Australian women are much more interested in these topics than men, and much less interested in news about sport and politics.

FIGURE 3.4: NEWS AVOIDANCE BY TOPIC (%)



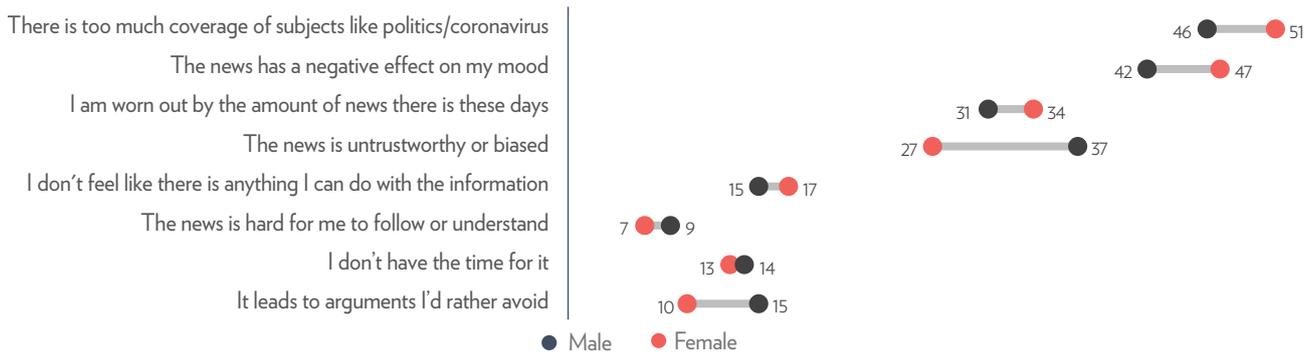
[Avoidance_topics_2023] You said that you try to actively avoid specific news topics. Which of the following news topics are you trying to avoid? Please select all that apply. [Base: Those who said they avoided specific topics (N=576)]

HALF OF WOMEN AVOID NEWS BECAUSE THERE IS TOO MUCH COVERAGE OF POLITICS/ COVID-19 AND IT NEGATIVELY EFFECTS THEIR MOOD

Many Australians say they avoid the news some of the time which is partly related to the amount and type of coverage and the negativity of news. In 2022 we asked people why they avoid the news. Both men and women were most likely to say they were avoiding news because there was too much coverage of politics and the COVID-19 pandemic, and that the news was having a negative impact on their

mood. As **figure 3.5** shows this was especially true for Australian women (51%) who found the volume of news overwhelming and that the news was having a negative impact on their mental health (47%). Women were also slightly more likely to feel worn out by the news than men and feel there is little they can do with the negative information the news delivers.

FIGURE 3.5: REASONS FOR AVOIDING NEWS 2022 (%)



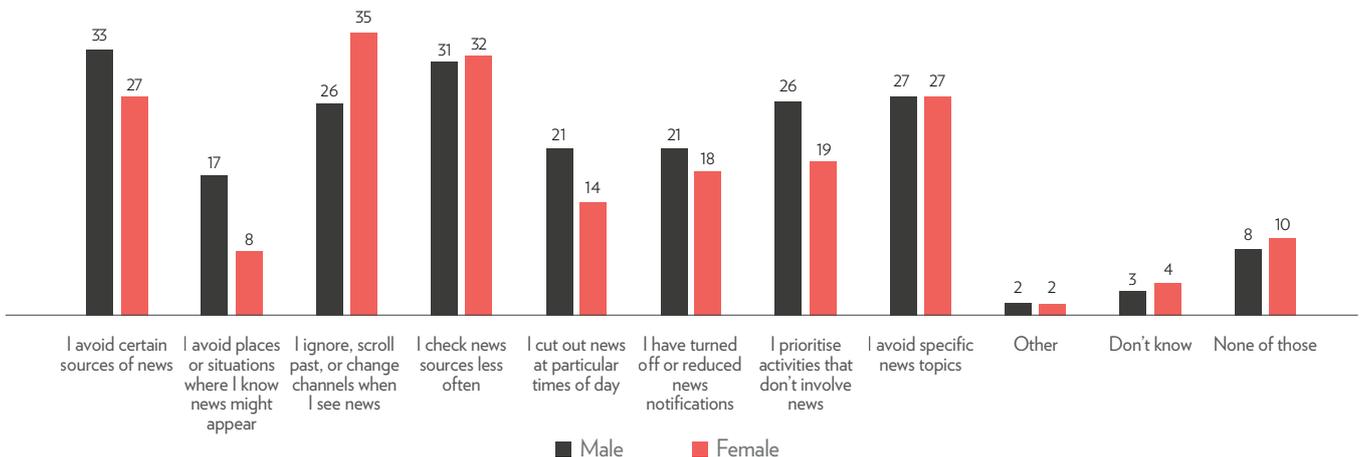
[Q1di_2017ii] Why do you find yourself actively trying to avoid the news? Please select all that apply. [Base: Among those who avoid news often, sometimes or occasionally N=1,386]

WOMEN SCROLL PAST NEWS TO AVOID IT WHILE MEN AVOID SPECIFIC TOPICS AND NEWS AT CERTAIN TIMES

We also find gendered differences in the way men and women avoid the news. **Figure 3.6** shows that while men and women are equally as likely to avoid certain news topics (27%), women (35%) are much more likely than men (26%) to simply ignore the news altogether, scroll past it while on their phone or change TV channels to escape it. In contrast, men are more inclined to take specific action to reduce their news consumption. They are more likely than women to avoid places and times where they might

encounter it and will prioritise activities that involve news. These differences highlight that news tends to be more important to men and plays a bigger role in their lives, than women. It also reflects the places they consume news. Women are more likely than men to get their news from social media and via their phone, while men are more likely to access news online. This scrolling and ignoring behaviour again reflects a more 'passive' approach to news consumption by Australian women than men.

FIGURE 3.6: AVOIDANCE BEHAVIOURS BY GENDER (%)



[Avoidance_behaviours_2023] You said that you try to actively avoid news. Which of the following, if any, do you do? Please select all that apply. [Base: Those who said they often/sometimes/occasionally avoided news, N=1,406]

GEN Z WOMEN ARE MORE LIKELY THAN OLDER WOMEN TO ENCOUNTER MISINFORMATION

In the past few years Australians have become more concerned about the presence of false or misleading information online. We asked respondents if they had encountered misinformation online. Men (69%) are more likely than women (56%) to say they have come into contact with false and misleading information. While women are more likely to say they don't know (27%), compared to men (18%) (see **figure 3.7**).

Although women are less likely than men to say they encountered misinformation, there are differences between the generations. Women in Gen Z (69%) are much more likely than women in other generations to say they encountered misinformation, with women in Gen X (49%) being the least likely (see **figure 3.8**). This could reflect the increased time Gen Z women spend on social media compared to older generations, or it could reflect a heightened awareness among young people of misinformation as an issue.

FIGURE 3.7: EXPERIENCE OF MISINFORMATION 2022 (%)

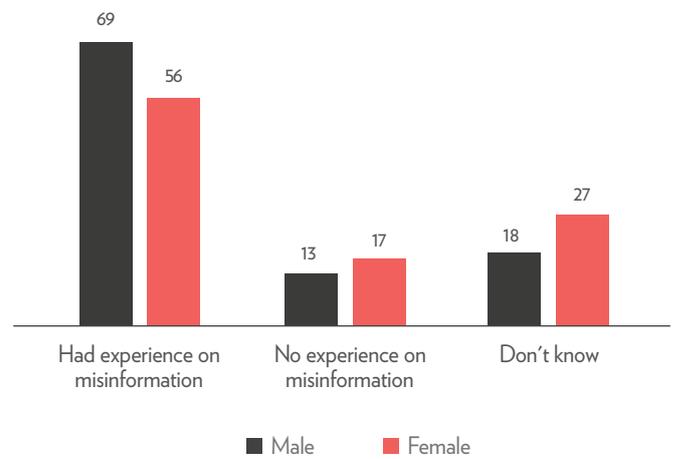
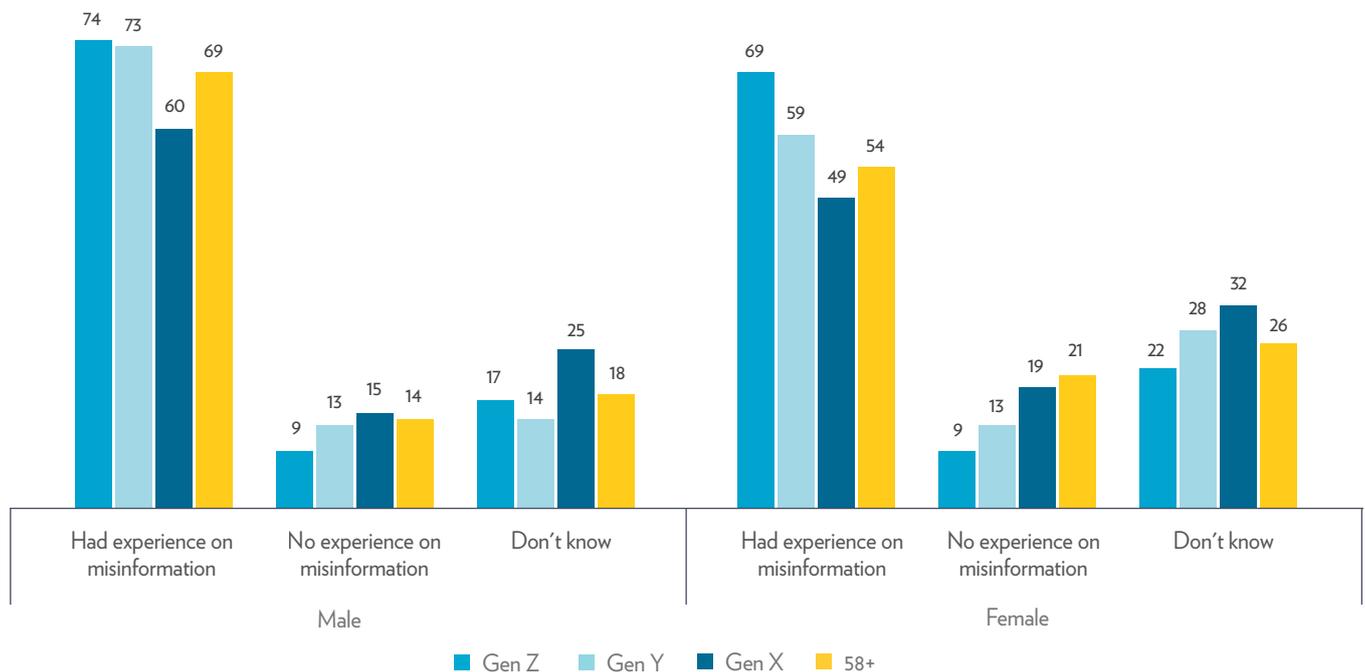


FIGURE 3.8: EXPERIENCE OF MISINFORMATION BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)



While online, respondents say they experienced misinformation about a range of different topics. Among the topics we asked about, overall men were more likely to say they encountered misinformation than women.

However, women were more likely to say they couldn't recall encountering misinformation from any of the listed topics (17%) or they don't know (27%) than men (13%, 18% respectively) (see **figure 3.9**).

FIGURE 3.9: EXPERIENCE OF MISINFORMATION TOPIC (%)

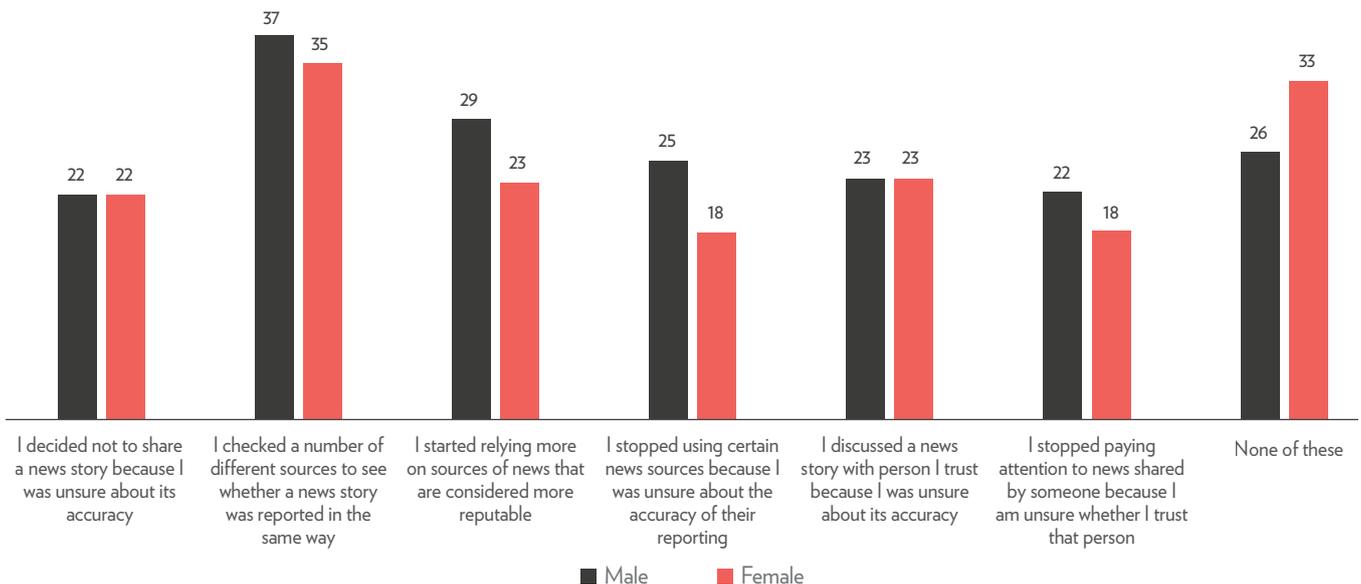


WOMEN ARE LESS LIKELY TO FACT CHECK THAN MEN

When they encounter dubious content or misinformation, one third of Australian women say they do not engage in any verification activities when they encounter dubious news content, compared to one-quarter (26%) of men (see **figure 3.10**). The data comes from the *Digital News Report: Australia 2019* in which we asked about a variety of news verification behaviours⁸.

Figure 3.10 shows that men and women are just as likely as each other to not share a story they think is inaccurate (22%) or discuss the dubious news item with a trusted friend (23%). Women are almost as likely to check a range of sources (35%) as men (37%) but on all other measures Australian women are less likely to fact check doubtful content than men. Only 18% of women said they stopped using news sources they were unsure about, or ceased paying attention to news shared by someone they didn't trust, compared with 22% of men.

FIGURE 3.10: RESPONSES TO MISINFORMATION(%)



[Q_LIT_2019] Have you done any of the following in the _last year_? Please select all that apply [N=2010].

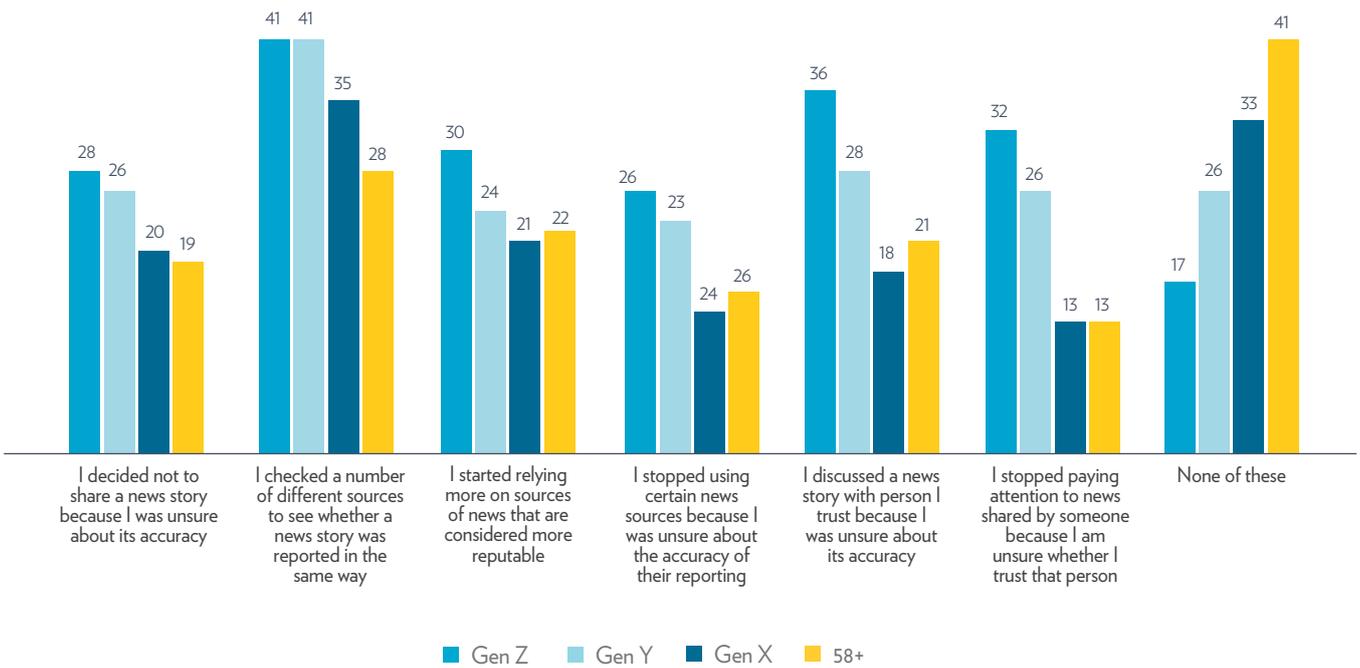
⁸ Fisher, C., Park, S., Lee, J., Fuller, G., & Sang, Y (2019). *Digital News Report: Australia 2019*. News & Media Research Centre, University of Canberra. Available on www.canberra.edu.au/research/faculty-research-centres/nmrc/digital-news-report-australia-2022

YOUNGER WOMEN ARE MORE ENGAGED IN FACTCHECKING THAN OLDER WOMEN

Young women appear to be more engaged in fact-checking or verification than older women, demonstrating more active and reactive approaches to verification rather than passive. **Figure 3.11** shows that older generations of women are the most likely to say they have not carried out any verification activities when confronted with unreliable

or inaccurate news. In contrast Gen Z women are the most likely across all measures. This likely indicates a greater level of media literacy and comfort in performing online verification tasks among younger Australian women than older.

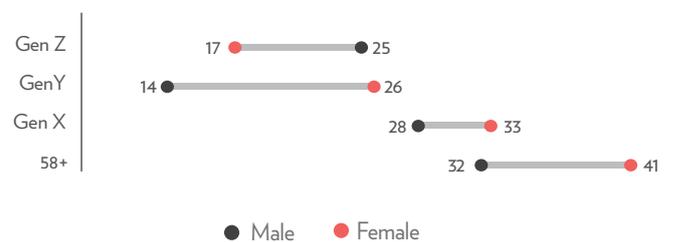
FIGURE 3.11: WOMEN'S RESPONSES TO MISINFORMATION BY GENERATION (%)



GEN Z WOMEN ARE MORE LIKELY TO ENGAGE IN VERIFICATION ACTIVITIES THAN THEIR MALE COUNTERPARTS

Interestingly, Gen Z women are more likely to fact check than Gen Z men. **Figure 3.12** shows that one quarter of Gen Z men say they haven't performed any type of verification compared to 17% of Gen Z women. This possibly reflects the fact that young women have lower levels of trust in news⁹ than men, which might be driving higher levels of verification to combat their scepticism towards news. In contrast, women across the other generations are more likely to have not engaged in fact-checking behaviours than their male counterparts which likely reflects their overall lower levels of interest and consumption of news.

FIGURE 3.12: THOSE WHO SAY 'NONE OF THESE' (%)



⁹Li, J., 2023. Not all skepticism is "healthy" skepticism: Theorizing accuracy-and identity-motivated skepticism toward social media misinformation. *New Media & Society*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448231179941>;

Nelson, J.L. and Lewis, S.C., 2023. Only "sheep" trust journalists? How citizens' self-perceptions shape their approach to news. *New media & society*, 25(7), pp.1522-1541.

WOMEN'S PREFERENCE FOR ALGORITHM-BASED CONTENT SELECTION

This year the *Digital News Report: Australia* found that Australians are divided in their opinions on automated content suggestions based on their previous news reading habits.

In general, a notable gender disparity exists in content satisfaction, with women expressing lower levels of satisfaction than men in relation to the role of algorithms and journalists in the selection of their news.

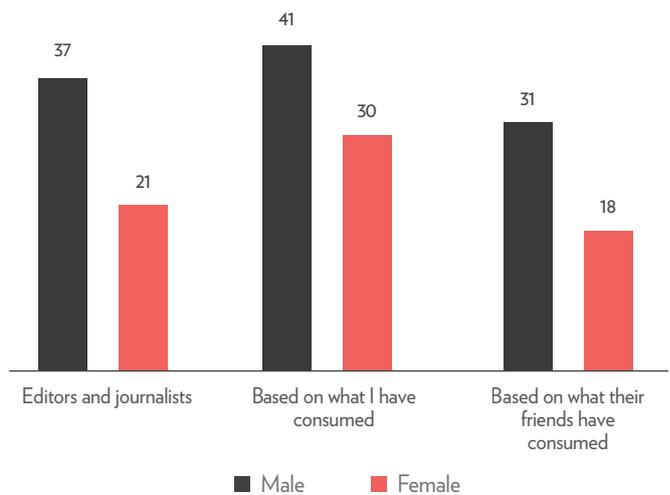
WOMEN'S PREFERENCE FOR ALGORITHM-BASED CONTENT SELECTION

In general, a notable gender disparity exists in content satisfaction, with women expressing lower levels of satisfaction than men in relation to the role of algorithms and journalists in the selection of their news. In the context of algorithm-based content selection, women express lower satisfaction than men. Less than a third (30%) of women agree that having their news automatically selected based on what they have previously consumed is a good way to get news, compared to 41% of men; and only 18% agree it is good to have their news automatically selected based on the news consumption of their friends (see **figure 3.13**). Women (21%) are also almost half as likely than men (37%) to think editors and journalists making selections is a good way to get news.

However, **table 2.1** reveals that younger generations are more willing to embrace algorithm-based curation of their news than older. Within the Gen Z cohort, women (42%) are equally as likely as men (41%) to be happy with algorithmic content selection based on their past consumption.

The 58 or older generations are the least content with any form of news curation compared to other generational cohorts. However, they still prefer their news to be selected

FIGURE 3.13: NEWS CURATION PREFERENCE (% THOSE WHO AGREE)



[Q10D_2016a] Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. Having stories selected for me by editors and journalists is a good way to get news. Having stories automatically selected for me on the basis of what I have consumed in the past is a good way to get news. Having stories automatically selected for me on the basis of what my friends have consumed is a good way to get news. (Base: N=2025).

by an algorithm based on their previous news consumption, rather than editors or journalists making the choice for them.

TABLE 2.1: SCEPTICISM TOWARDS NEWS ALGORITHMS (% THOSE WHO AGREE)

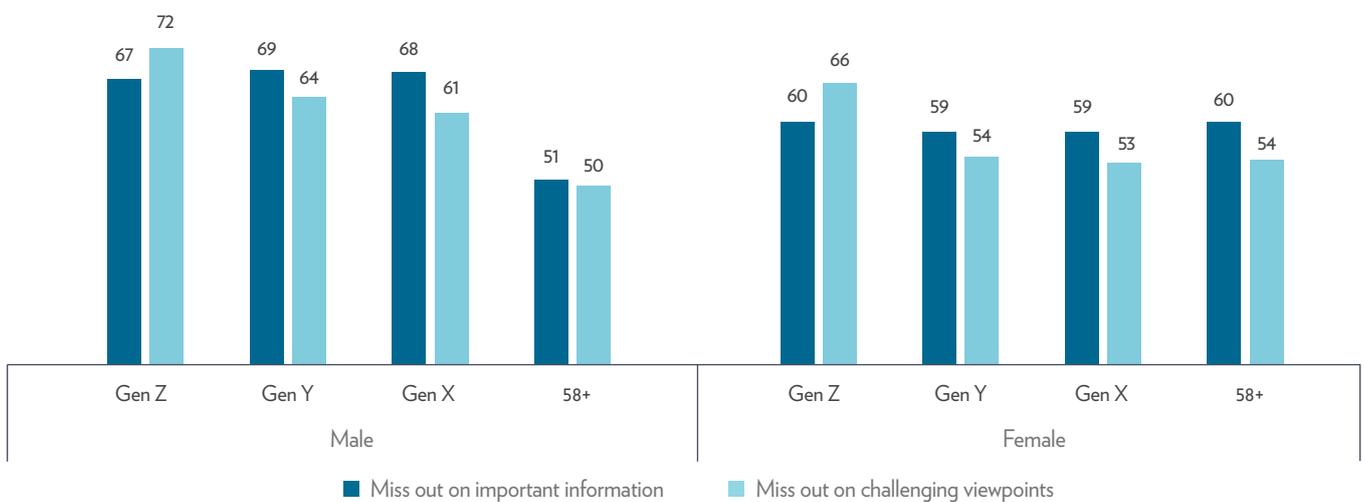
	Editors and journalists		Based on what I have consumed		Based on what their friends have consumed	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Gen Z	24	41	42	41	22	38
Gen Y	29	56	52	60	27	52
Gen X	18	46	27	47	15	35
58+	15	13	19	20	11	8

OLDER MEN ARE LEAST CONCERNED ABOUT PERSONALISED NEWS

We asked whether respondents were concerned they might miss out on important information or challenging viewpoints because of news personalisation. Irrespective of gender distinctions, younger generations express greater apprehension toward personalised news (see **figure 3.14**). This can possibly be attributed to their heightened familiarity with the online news landscape compared to older generations. With the exception of those aged 58 or older, men, in general, express more concern about both

missing out on important information and encountering limited viewpoints compared to their female counterparts. Interestingly, among the 58 or older cohort, women are notably more likely to express concern that personalised news might lead them to miss out on important information (60%) or diverse viewpoints (54%) than men (51% and 50%, respectively). This finding underscores a significant gender difference within those aged 58 or older about the potential negative implications of personalised news.

FIGURE 3.14: CONCERN ABOUT PERSONALISED NEWS (%)



[Q10D_2016b] Now when thinking about more personalised news, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. I worry that more personalised news may mean that I miss out on important information. I worry that more personalised news may mean that I miss out on challenging viewpoints. (Base: N=2025).

COMMENTARY

WOMEN ARE MORE INTERESTED IN MANY NEWS TOPICS THAN MEN, BUT THE NEWS INDUSTRY IS FAILING THEM

Luba Kasso, AKAS Co-founder, Audience Strategist, Researcher, Journalist and Author
Richard Addy, AKAS Co-founder, Strategy and Impact Consultant

The most common explanation for women's news consumption being lower than men's globally, and indeed in Australia, is that women are assumed to have a lower interest in news, which is often linked to their allegedly affording news lower importance than men do. But are women really less interested in news than men? Or are they less interested in the current news offering, which mostly reflects a male editorial agenda, men's viewpoints, and men's news needs? The evidence we have gathered and analysed in the course of researching and writing the Missing Perspectives of Women in News series of reports over the last three years, including the latest From Outrage to Opportunity, is firmly stacked in favour of the latter argument. Furthermore, our experience, having collectively worked in or with news organisations for over 35 years, is that news organisations are mostly in the dark when it comes to understanding what women need from the news. Why? Because they rarely disaggregate the performance data of their offering by gender, and almost never at a story level. The editorial decisions about women's preferences in news content and formats are largely based on men's needs being reflected as the default.

According to the *Digital News Report: Australia 2022*, Australian women have greater interest than men in 11 out of 16 tested news topics. Among these 11 genres are news about mental health/wellbeing, COVID-19 news, local news, climate change news, social justice news and many others. The five topics where women's interest is lower than men's happen to be high-profile news genres, typically dominated by male editors, that drive the news agenda: business, science & technology, political, international and sports news. Our latest gender analysis of 1,166 of the most senior editorial roles across six countries in the global north and south – home to a quarter of the world's population – revealed a significant male bias. For example, three in four editors-in-chief and the same proportion of the most senior political editors' roles are occupied by men. Men's perspectives of what constitutes an important story (and what doesn't) drive the editorial agenda. It is no surprise therefore, that half of women in Australia claim to avoid the news because of too much coverage of politics/COVID-19 news, as outlined in this report. We argue that women are avoiding news about politics because of a lack of story angles relevant to them and their communities, with reporting often focusing on a macro lens rather than

the micro and human-interest angles that tend to draw women in.

Women in Australia are less likely to find their points of view covered in the news, which naturally has a knock-on effect on their engagement with the news. According to AKAS' analysis of the GDELT online news database between January 2017 and June 2023, men's share of voice in Australian online news, whether as protagonists, experts or sources, is twice as high as that of women. Moreover, little progress has been made in the last six years, with last year having been the worst for women's share of voice. In addition, our analysis found that the proportion of articles mentioning gender issues of relevance to women is woeful in Australia. In 2022 only 1% of the online news coverage referenced key gender-related terms including gender inequality/inequity, pay gap, feminism, sexism, and many others. Coverage of these issues collapsed to 0.7% in 2020 and is yet to recover to pre-pandemic levels (1.09%).

Women news consumers are a lifeline for the declining news industry. Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC) is forecasting that Australia's news media market will contract by 0.5% per year over the next five years. According to AKAS' analysis of Reuters' annual Digital News Report survey data from the seven editions between 2017 to 2023, **the average gap between men and women in news subscription is 21 percentage points in favour of men.** Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the lack of news relevant to women, this gap appears to have widened in the last year. If news media organisations were to make their news offering more women-inclusive without alienating men consumers, they would narrow the current **gender consumption gap**, which **stands at 17 percentage points in favour of men¹**, and slow down or arrest the news media industry's decline in revenues.

AKAS' model shows that **if this gender consumption gap were reduced** by increasing women news consumers by one percentage point each year between 2024 and 2028, **this would generate cumulative revenues of \$343 million Australian dollars (\$229 million US dollars) for Australian news media providers.** To benefit from this substantive revenue opportunity, **news media providers must improve the relevance of their news offering to women**, firstly by rebalancing the decision-making

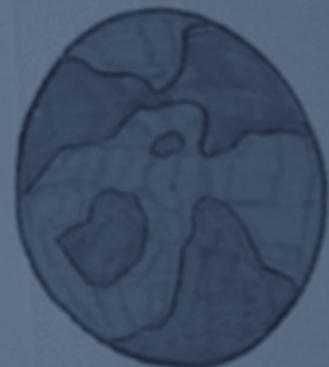
editorial and byline voices within high-profile beats like politics and business. In addition, they must transform their harsh newsroom cultures to become more inclusive, so that women editors and reporters sitting at the decision-making table are reassured that their voices are being heard and their ideas valued. To grow their female audiences, news providers must also be intentional about reflecting the perspectives of women of all ethnicities as story contributors, and develop news offers that fit women's lives. Once women find that their and their communities' needs, worries, and hopes are reflected in the news, they will engage more with the news. The trailblazing news outlets which grab the substantive opportunity that women represent, both in Australia and globally, will also be the ones that are more likely to flourish in the next few years.

¹In Australia we calculated that the gender news consumption gap in 2023 is 17% using a mix of survey-based evidence from the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023 and the behavioural-based "monthly visits" gender data extracted from SimilarWeb in May 2023.

4 WOMEN'S VIEWS ON GENDER AND CLIMATE CHANGE

CLIMATE
CHANGE
is
REAL

SAVE THE
PLANET



NEE

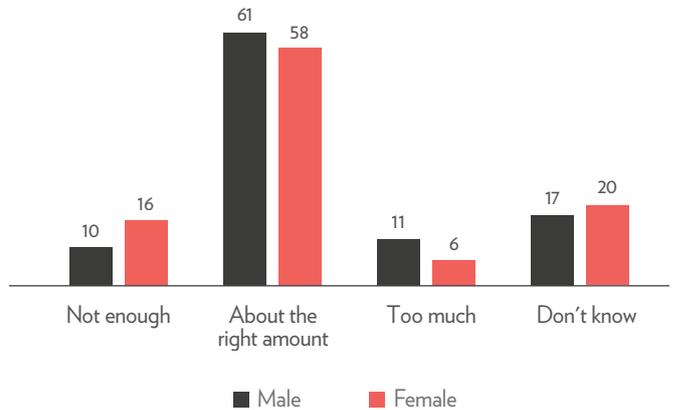
The *Digital News Report 2021*⁹ survey included questions about the amount and fairness of news coverage. We asked respondents about their views on the news media's

coverage of their gender, age group, where they live, social and economic class, ethnicity, and political views.

WOMEN MORE LIKELY TO SAY THEIR GENDER IS NOT COVERED ENOUGH BY NEWS

Most respondents appear to be satisfied with the amount of news coverage focused on their gender. Men (61%) are slightly more likely than women (58%) to say there is about the right amount of coverage of issues relevant to their gender. Though only a small proportion, women (16%) are more likely than men (10%) to say there isn't enough coverage of their gender. Men (11%) are also slightly more likely to say there is too much compared to women (6%).

FIGURE 4.1: NEWS COVERAGE ON YOUR GENDER 2021 (%)



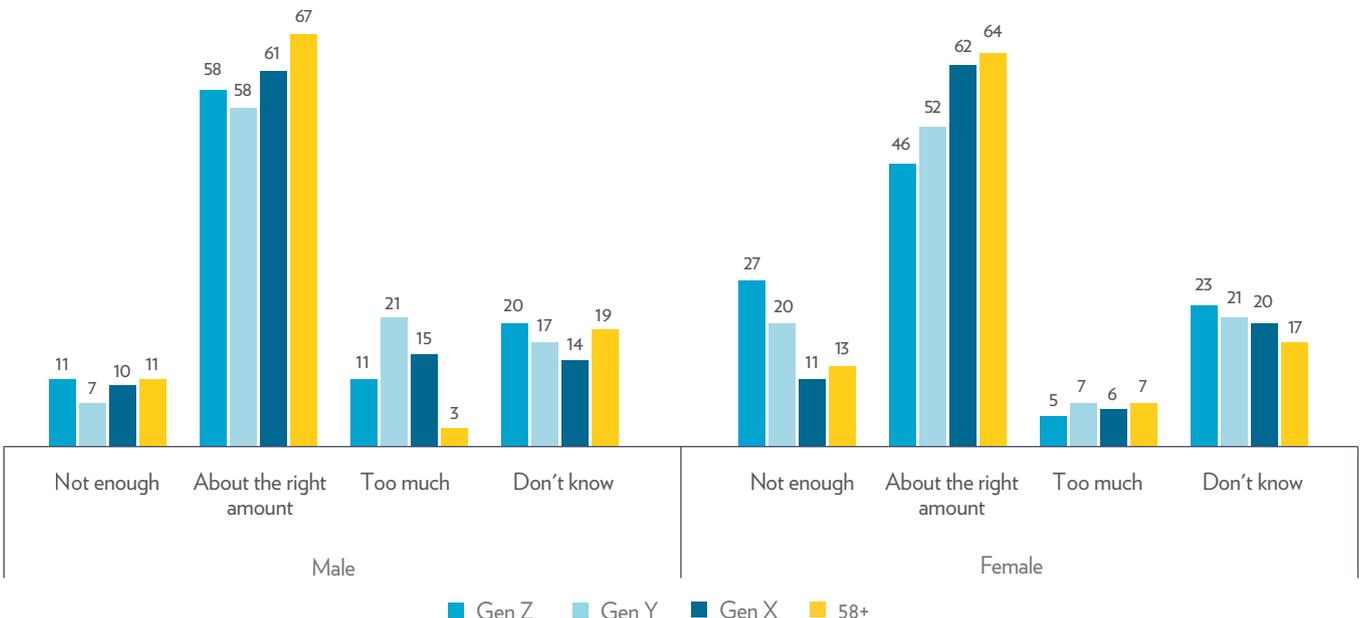
[Div1_2021] Thinking about the news in general in your country, do you think that there is too much, about the right amount, or not enough news coverage of each of the following: People your gender [Base: N=2034]

GEN Z WOMEN ARE THE MOST LIKELY TO SAY THERE IS NOT ENOUGH NEWS COVERAGE OF THEIR GENDER

There are substantial differences between the generations on this question. Women in Gen Z (27%) and Gen Y (20%) are much more likely than men in Gen Z (11%) and men in Gen Y (7%) to say there isn't enough coverage of issues relevant to their gender. While young women appear least

satisfied, older women are around as satisfied as older men. Women in Gen X (62%) and those aged 58 or older (64%) are much more likely than Gen Z (46%) and Gen Y women (52%) to say there is about the right amount of coverage for women's issues.

FIGURE 4.2: NEWS COVERAGE OF YOUR GENDER BY GENDER AND GENERATION 2021 (%)



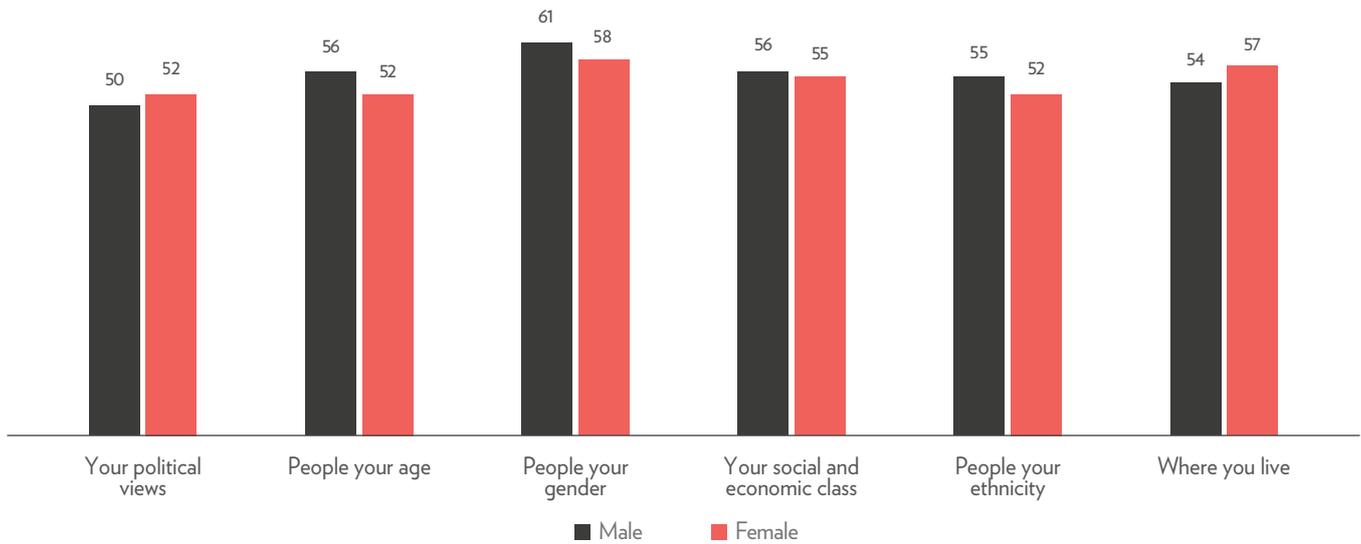
⁹Park, S., Fisher, C., McGuinness, K., Lee, J. Y. and McCallum, K. (2021). *Digital News Report: Australia 2021*. Canberra: News & Media Research Centre, University of Canberra.

MEN SLIGHTLY MORE SATISFIED THAN WOMEN WITH COVERAGE OF PEOPLE THEIR AGE AND ETHNICITY

The data suggests that the perception of coverage may be linked to intersectional disparity as well. In addition to gender, women are slightly less likely than men to say they feel there is adequate coverage of people their age

(52%) and ethnicity (52%) compared to men (56%; 55% respectively). Conversely, men are less likely to say there is adequate coverage of where they live (54%) compared to women (57%) (see **figure 4.3**).

FIGURE 4.3: NEWS COVERAGE IS ABOUT THE RIGHT AMOUNT 2021 (%)

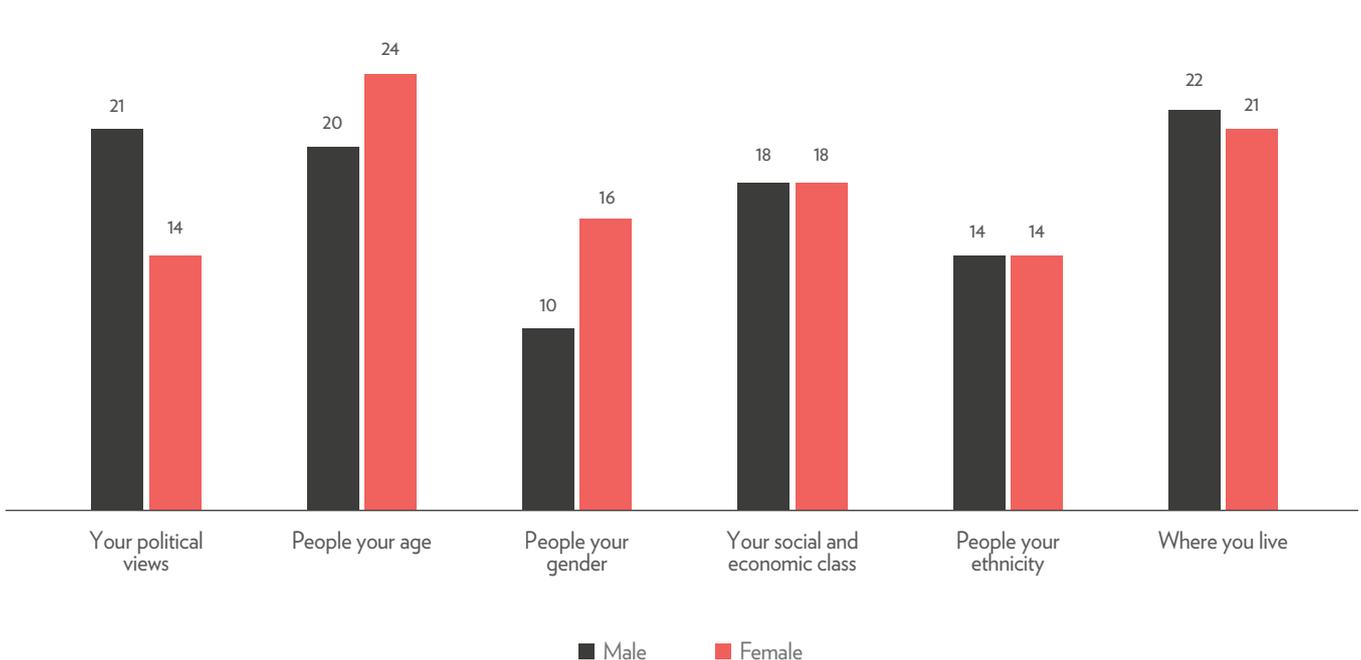


[Div1_2021] Thinking about the news in general in your country, do you think that there is too much, about the right amount, or not enough news coverage of each of the following: [Base: N=2,034]

Men are more likely than women to say there is not enough coverage of people who share their politics. For men, 21% say there is not enough coverage of people who share their political views, compared to only 14% of women who say the same (see **figure 4.4**). Whereas in contrast, women

(24%) are more likely than men (20%) to say there isn't enough coverage of people their age. It's possible this and other data reflect the status of older women as being particularly marginalised due to the long-term impacts of the gender pay gap and other gender specific disparities.

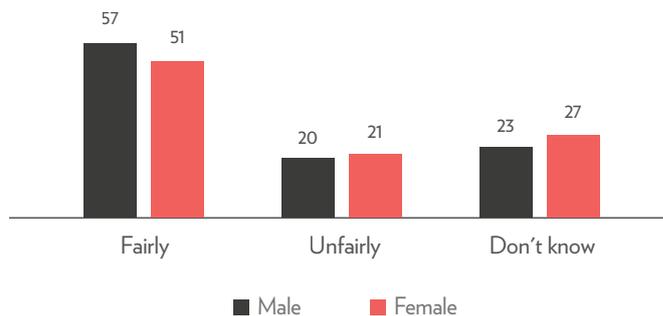
FIGURE 4.4: NEWS COVERAGE IS NOT ENOUGH 2021 (%)



We asked respondents whether news reported fairly on people of their own gender. While women (51%) were less likely than men (57%) to say their gender received fair coverage, they were around the same as men in saying they were reported on unfairly (F 20%; M 21%) (see **figure 4.5**). Women (27%) were instead more likely to say they didn't know, compared to men (23%).

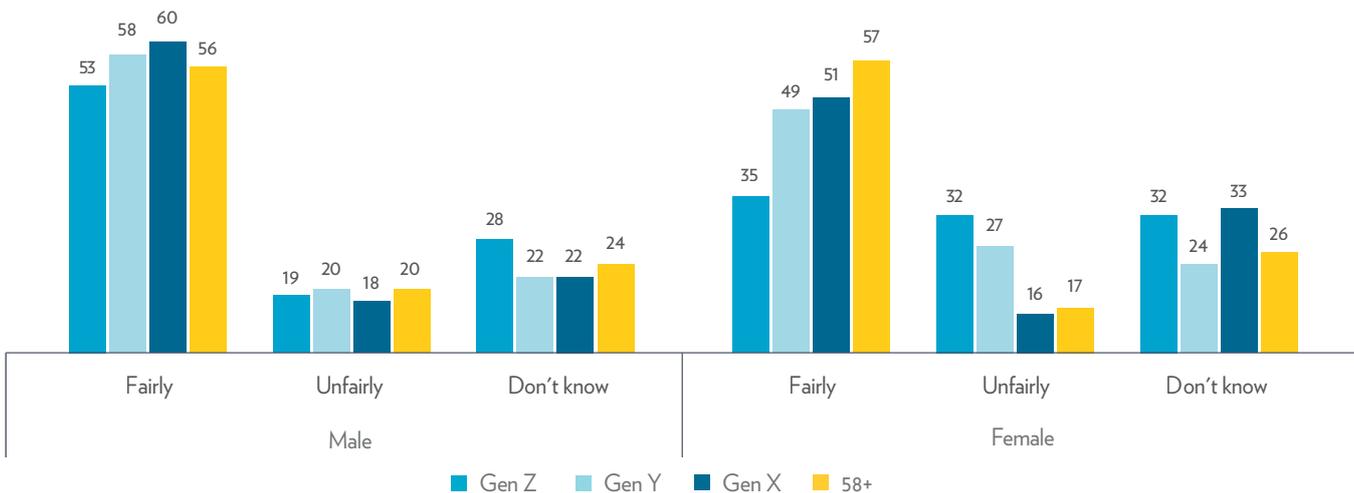
However, once again there are clear differences between younger and older women. Women in Gen Z (32%) and Gen Y (27%) were much more likely than men in Gen Z (19%) and Gen Y (20%) to say their gender was unfairly reported on (see **figure 4.6**). They were also much more likely than women in Gen X (16%) and women aged 58 or older (17%). This suggests that young women in particular view news organisations as failing to cover women's issues fairly and adequately.

FIGURE 4.5: VIEWS ABOUT THE FAIRNESS OF COVERAGE ON PEOPLE YOUR GENDER 2021 (%)



[Div2_2021] Thinking about the news in general in your country, do you think that news organisations in your country cover each of the following fairly or unfairly?: People your gender [Base: N=2,034]

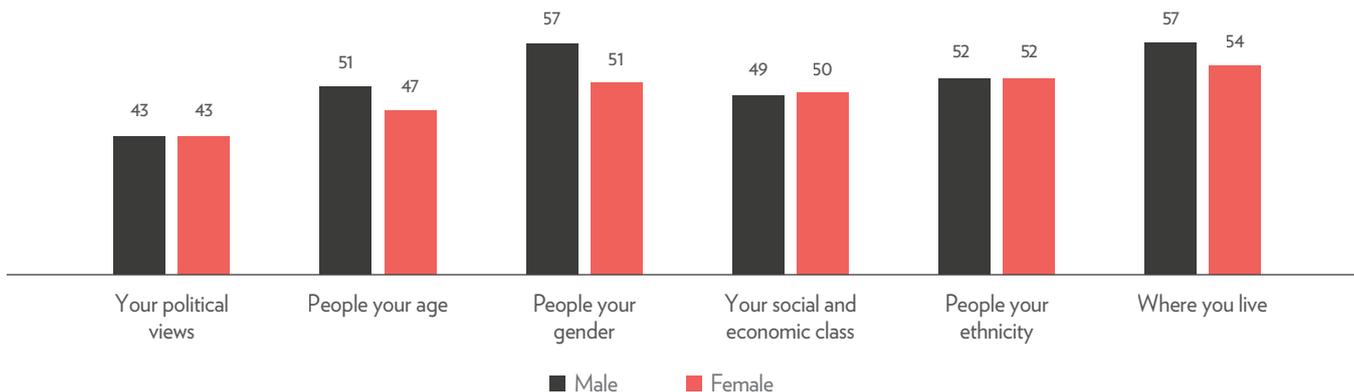
FIGURE 4.6: VIEW OF FAIRNESS OF COVERAGE ON PEOPLE YOUR GENDER BY GENERATION 2021 (%)



Men and women are roughly even in saying the news is fair in its coverage of their political views, class, and ethnic backgrounds. However, women (47%) are less likely to say that people their own age receive fair coverage compared

to men (51%) (see **figure 4.7**). Women (54%) are also slightly less likely to say the place they live in receives fair coverage compared to men (57%).

FIGURE 4.7: NEWS MEDIA FAIRLY REPRESENT (%)



[Div2_2021] Thinking about the news in general in your country, do you think that news organisations in your country cover each of the following fairly or unfairly? [Base: N=2,034]

WOMEN ARE MORE INTERESTED IN CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT NEWS THAN MEN

Global warming and the climate crisis have become the pre-eminent political issues for younger generations in recent years. As **table 1** in **Chapter 1** (p. 12) shows, interest in environment and climate change news is higher among women (38%) than men (33%). From the issues we asked

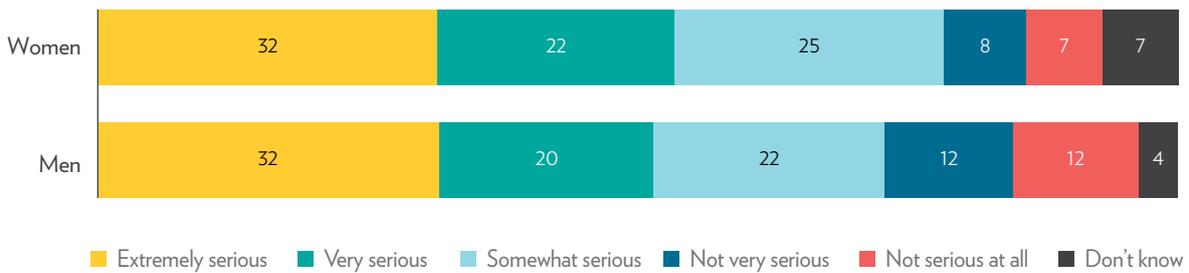
about, climate change is also the second most interesting news topic for women behind crime and personal safety (46%). In comparison, men are more interested in business, finance, and economics news (39%), sports news (49%) and political news (51%).

WOMEN ARE MORE CONCERNED ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE THAN MEN

Australian women are also more concerned about climate change compared with men. When asked how serious climate change is as an issue, more than three-quarters of women respondents (78%) say that climate change is a somewhat, very, or extremely serious issue, compared to 73% of men (see **figure 4.8**). Men are conversely slightly

more likely to say climate change is not serious at all (F 8%; M 12%). It's possible this gap is partly related to political orientation, given that women are more likely to say they don't know their political orientation than men, and climate change is a strongly politicised issue in Australia.

FIGURE 4.8: CONCERN ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE (%)

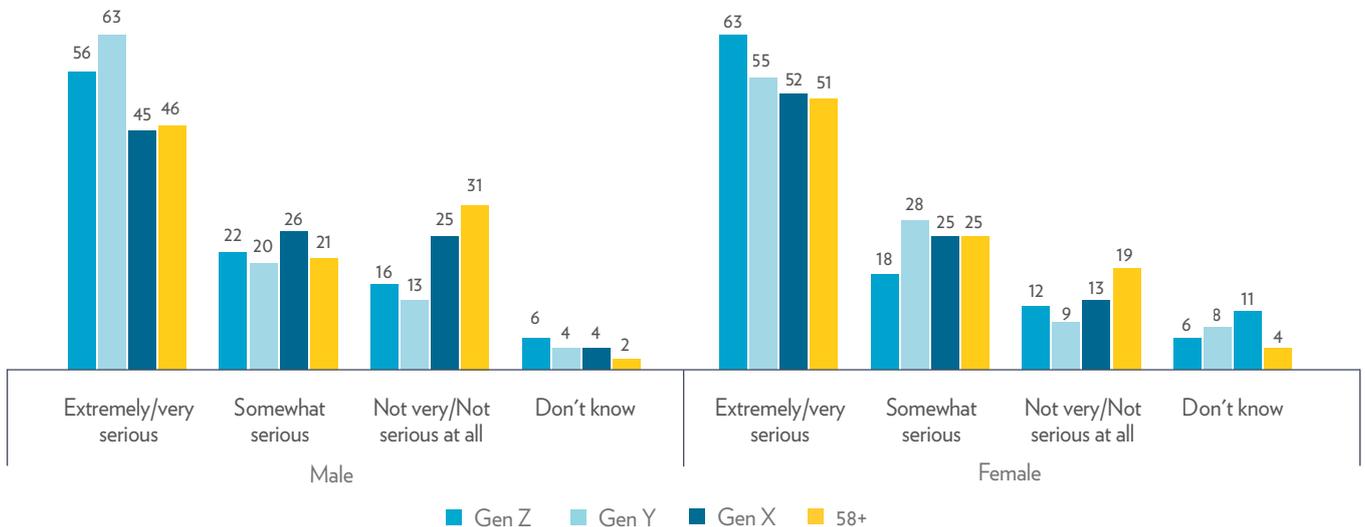


[C1_2020] How serious a problem, if at all, do you think climate change is? [Base: N=2,038]

Women in Gen Z (63%), Gen X (52%) and aged 58 or older (52%) are all more likely to say climate change is an extremely or very serious issue compared with men of those generations (see **figure 4.9**). Gen Y is the exception, in which almost two-thirds (63%) of men say it is extremely

or very serious compared with 55% of women. Notably, men aged 58 or older (31%) are the most likely to say it is not very or not at all serious, compared with women in the same age group (19%).

FIGURE 4.9: CONCERN ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)

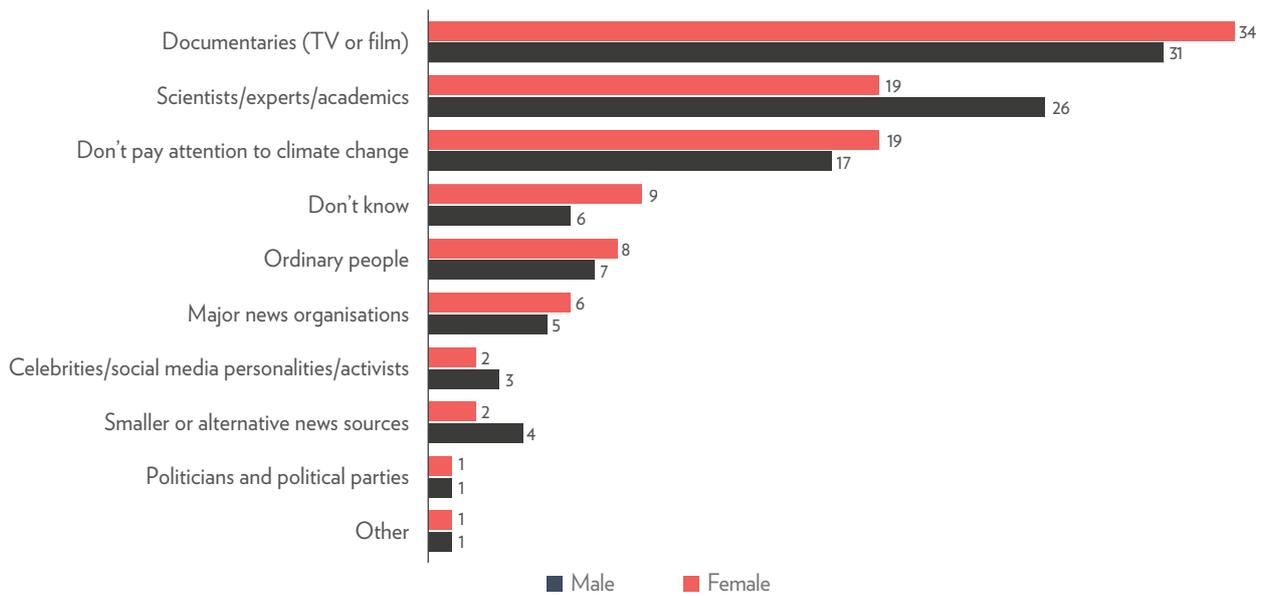


WOMEN MOSTLY PAY ATTENTION TO DOCUMENTARIES OR EXPERTS FOR CLIMATE CHANGE NEWS

We asked respondents what sources of news about climate change they pay most attention to. For all respondents, the top response was film or television documentaries (see **figure 4.10**). Women (34%) are slightly more likely than men (31%) to pay attention to these media sources. In contrast, scientists, experts and academics, are more

popular sources of climate change information among men (26%) than women (19%). Major news organisations are comparatively less likely to garner attention, with only 6% of women and 5% of men saying they mostly paid attention to them as a source of climate change news.

FIGURE 4.10: SOURCES OF CLIMATE CHANGE NEWS YOU PAY MOST ATTENTION TO (%)

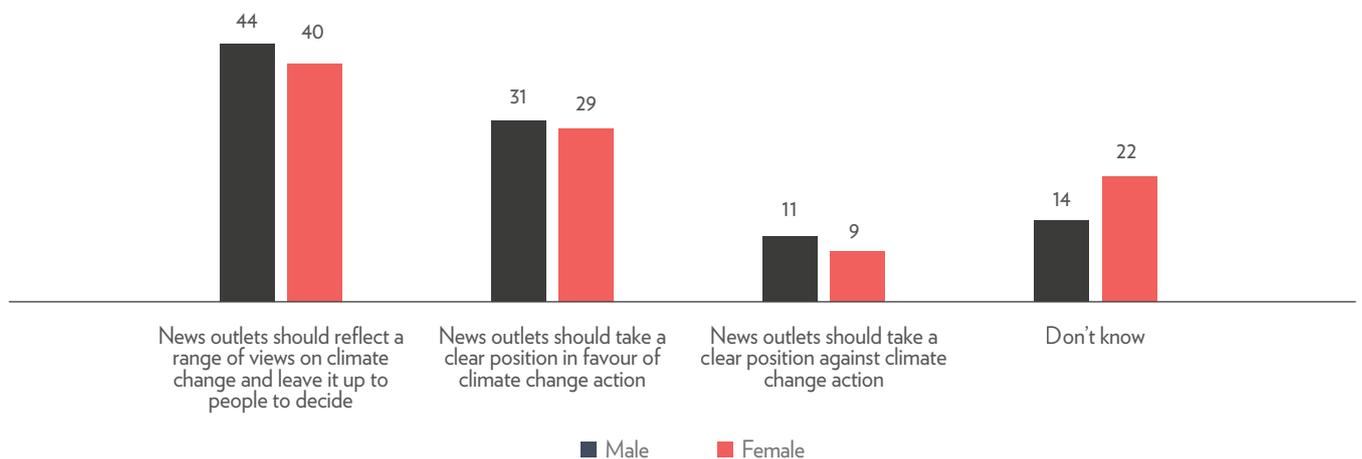


[C1_2022a] When it comes to climate change news, which of the following sources, if any, do you pay most attention to? Please select all that apply. [Base: N=2,038]

In general, respondents are more likely to agree that news organisations should be impartial and balanced. However, in the case of reporting on climate change a large proportion want news to take a clear position either way on the issue. Men are slightly more likely than women to

say news should take a clear position in favour of climate change action (31%) or against (11%) (**figure 4.11**). Women are most likely to say they don't know (22%) in response to this question compared to men (14%).

FIGURE 4.11: BELIEFS ABOUT HOW NEWS OUTLETS SHOULD COVER CLIMATE CHANGE (%)

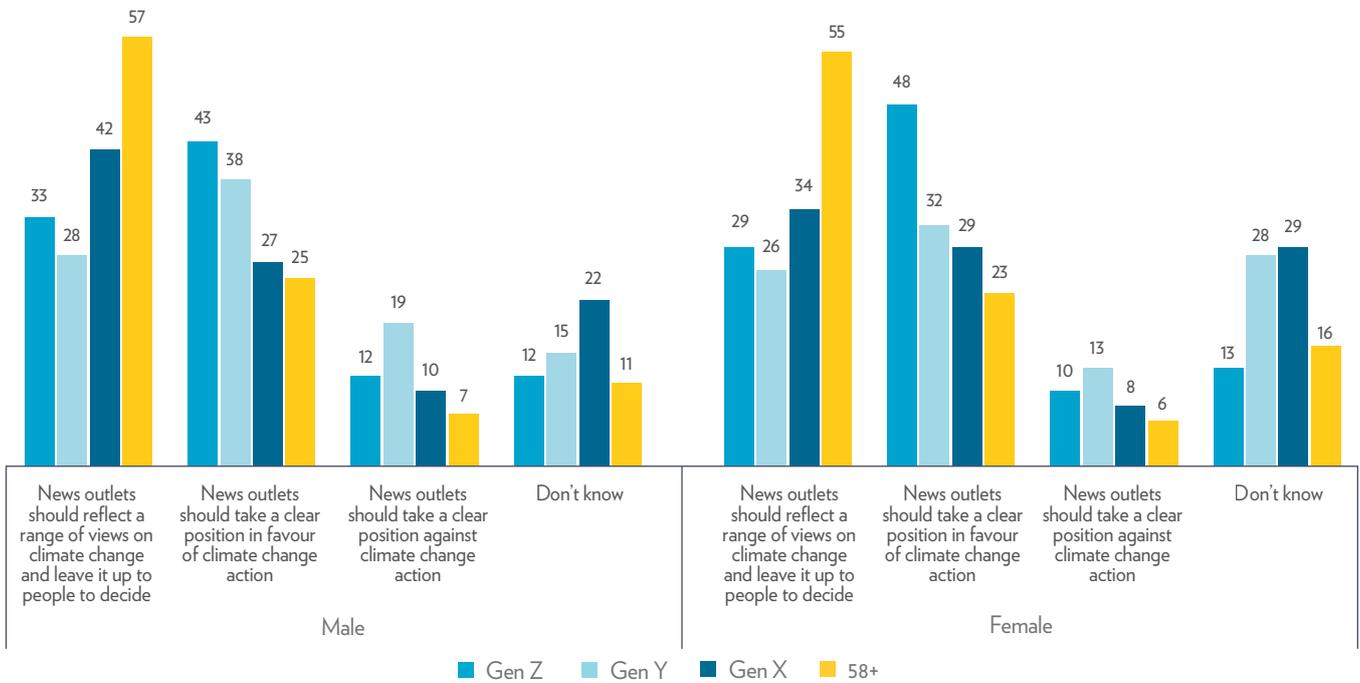


[QAdvocacy_2022] Thinking about the way news outlets cover climate change, which of the following statements best describes your view? [Base: N=2,038]

Views on this issue appear to be more related to age than gender. Those in older generations are much more likely to say news should be impartial and balanced on climate, among those aged 58 or older, 57% of men and 55% of

women say this (see **figure 4.12**). Comparatively, among Gen Y only 28% of men and 32% of women say the same. Women in Gen Y (28%) are much higher than men in the same generation (25%) in saying they don't know.

FIGURE 4.12: BELIEFS ABOUT HOW NEWS OUTLETS SHOULD COVER CLIMATE CHANGE BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)

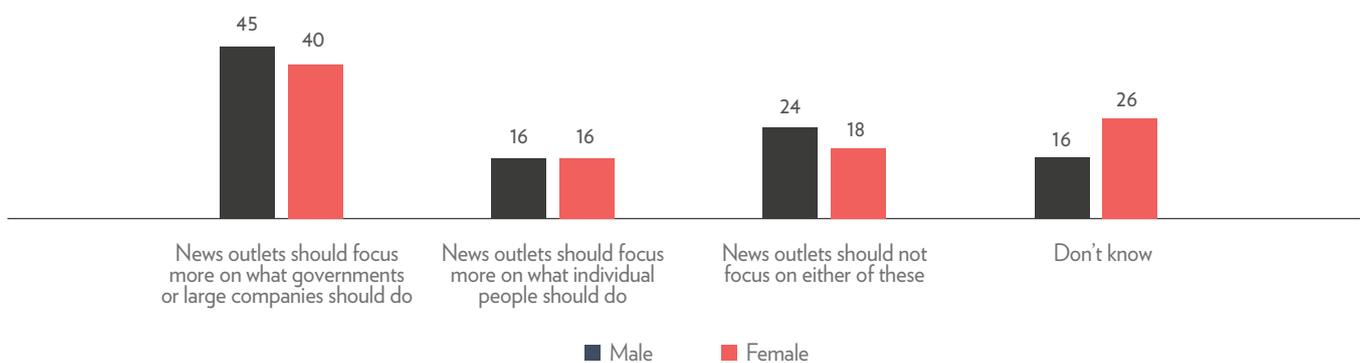


WOMEN ARE LESS CERTAIN ABOUT WHAT NEWS OUTLETS SHOULD FOCUS ON WHEN REPORTING ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Men (45%) are more likely than women (40%) to say that news should focus on what government and large companies should do in response to the climate crisis (see **figure 4.13**). However, men (16%) and women (16%)

equally say news should focus on what individuals can do. Women (26%) are much more likely to say they don't know what news should focus on, compared to men (16%).

FIGURE 4.13: BELIEFS ABOUT WHAT NEWS OUTLETS SHOULD FOCUS ON WHEN REPORTING ON CLIMATE ISSUES (%)



[C2_2022a] Thinking about news about climate change, which of the following statements best describes your view? [Base: N=2,038]

Similarly, when looking at the generational split, young people are somewhat more likely to say news should focus on what government and large organisations should be doing, while older people are more likely to say news

should not focus on either compared to younger audiences. Women in Gen Y (31%) and Gen X (32%) are much more likely to say they 'don't know' on this issue, compared with men in Gen Y (10%) and Gen X (24%) (see **figure 4.14**).

FIGURE 4.14: BELIEFS ABOUT WHAT NEWS OUTLETS SHOULD FOCUS ON BY GENDER AND GENERATION (%)

