

PRESS RELEASE

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News media websites emerge as the most popular source of news

68% of Finns directly access the websites and applications of news media when searching for news, according to the Digital News Report 2020 survey published by the Reuters Institute at the University of Oxford. Overall, the Internet has surpassed traditional media as the primary source of news. The use of social media for finding news has also become more common, compared to last year.

Although television news held the top position for years, newspaper websites and applications emerged this year as the preferred source of news in Finland. 68% of Finns report that they access the websites or applications of news media directly online when searching for news, whereas the most typical path to online news in most of the other countries in the survey is either social media, a search engine or a service compiling news links. Other online news sources have also become increasingly popular in Finland while television news and printed papers are declining in popularity.

A large share of Finns, up to 88% of the respondents to the survey, report that they follow the news online. The popularity of online news has slowly increased over the year, overshadowing traditional media. Up to 43% of Finns report that they use social media as a news source each week. “Social media services are not officially news media, but news is an important part of them nevertheless. Commenting on recent topics is a common activity on social media, and both news media and other users use social media to share news stories,” says Researcher **Esa Reunanen** from the University of Tampere.

Differences between age groups in use of social media for news

9% of Finns report social media as their primary source of news. The share of social media in primary news sources has slowly increased by three percentage points since 2015. A clear age distribution can be seen in the primary use of social media for news: 31% of those aged 18–24 and 16% of those aged 25–34 report social media as their primary news source, whereas less than 10% of those in the older age groups report primarily using social media for news. In the age group of 65+, as few as 2% report social media as their primary news source. “Younger people, in particular, are constantly browsing the digital stream, picking what matters to them and deciding which topics they want to keep half an eye on and which topics they want to properly focus on,” says **Mona Haapsaari**, Managing Editor of Digital Content for MTV Uutiset.

In news use, Facebook overshadows other social media channels; 32% of Finns report using Facebook for this purpose. The next most popular channel for news use is YouTube; 15% of Finns report using YouTube for news. Divided by age groups, the use of YouTube for news is the most popular among Finns aged 18–24. WhatsApp is particularly popular for news among the youngest age groups: 17% of those aged 18–24 as well as those aged 25–34 report using WhatsApp for news. “This year, we once again see how social media particularly shapes young people’s ways of consuming news,” says **Noora Alanne**, Director, New Growth at Finnmedia and Executive Director at the Media Industry Research Foundation of Finland.

Finns are interested in news

Generally speaking, Finns are interested in the news. Up to 67% of Finns report that they are extremely or very interested in the news. In fact, Finns are among the 10 countries most interested in the news in

the survey. Interest in the news can be seen in how often people follow the news: 89% of Finns report that they follow the news at least daily.

The relevance of news media is affected by whether journalism is considered significant and necessary for the entire society. 77% of Finns consider independent journalism important for the functionality of society. The share of those considering independent journalism important in Finland is higher than the international average. Finns also prefer to find their news from sources that do not express a particular opinion instead of sources that agree or disagree with their own opinion. “One way to look at it is that people want the media to present the ‘bigger picture’, after which each person can form their own opinion,” says Researcher Esa Reunanen.

Finns still trust the news

As in previous years, Finns trust the news the most among all the countries in the survey. As many as two in three Finns trust most of the news they follow. Slightly over 50% of Finns report that they trust most news. Trust in the news varies among Finns according to gender, age, education and political attitude. Women are more likely to trust the news than men, whereas young people trust the news less, on average.

Since 2015, Finns’ trust in most news has declined by 12 percentage points, but their trust in most of the news they are following has only declined by 4 percentage points. However, generally speaking, Finns consider mainstream news media as relatively reliable. The discussion on fake news in recent years as well as unreliable publications and news may explain the general weakening of trust. “The key problem with disinformation or other manipulation is not the direct impact on the knowledge of citizens or on an individual voting decision, but how they damage democratic norms and undermine the opportunities for encounters,” says Journalist **Olli Seuri** from YLE.

In Finland’s country report, the research results are commented on by **Mona Haapsaari**, Managing Editor of Digital Content for MTV Uutiset; **Eero Hyvönen**, Chair of the Council for Mass Media; **Inna-Pirjetta Lahti**, founder and CEO of PING Helsinki; **Susanna Landor**, Editor-in-Chief of Hufvudstadsbladet; and Journalist **Olli Seuri** from YLE.

The Reuters Institute Digital News Report compares the use of news in 40 countries. The survey is conducted annually, and Finland has been included since 2014. The information is based on a questionnaire with approximately 2,000 respondents from each country.

Further information

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