

PRESS RELEASE

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Trust in news strengthened during the COVID-19 pandemic

The trust that Finns have in news increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, according to the Digital News Report 2021 survey published by the Reuters Institute at the University of Oxford. Trust in news was also strengthened in most of the other countries that participated in the survey.

Among Finns, 73% report that they trust the news they follow, which is 4 percentage points more than in the previous year. The share of Finns who trust most of the news increased by 9 percentage points to 65%. “The most likely reason for such a clear increase in trust is the COVID-19 pandemic,” says researcher **Esa Reunanen** from Tampere University, who was responsible for Finland’s country report.

The trust that Finns have in the news was, as in previous years, the largest in the survey and the difference compared to most other countries increased. The relatively high level of trust among Finns is thought to be connected to Finns’ general trust in institutions. Previously, trust in news was declining in Finland, as in many of the other surveyed countries. “There have been signs of social polarisation in the decline of trust in the previous years. However, it is typical that the trust people place in democracy and politics is highlighted during times of crisis. It will be interesting to see what the research results look like after the pandemic,” says **Noora Alanne**, Executive Director of the Media Industry Research Foundation of Finland.

Trust in news from social and search also slightly increased from last year. Among Finns, 18% said they trust news in social media (2020: 16%) and 30% said they trust the news they get from search (2020: 26%). In Finland, the difference between trust in news in general and news in social is greater than in any other country in the survey.

Among Finns, 38% have encountered false or misleading information about COVID-19. Most commonly, Finns expressed most concern over activists or activist groups (20%), the Finnish Government (18%) or regular people (17%) as sources of false COVID-19 information. Reporters or news organisations were regarded by 7% of Finns as the most concerning sources.

“The role of Finnish and Finnish-language media has become more apparent during exceptional times. News activities that present facts and maintain an open debate create far-reaching positive effects throughout society. Its value cannot be measured in money alone,” says **Timo Harakka**, Minister of Transport and Communications, in the report.

In addition to information about COVID-19, Finns reported that they had seen false or misleading information about politics (32%), climate change (26%) and immigration (25%). Those who use traditional publishing channels as their main source of news said they had encountered false information less than on average. Those who accessed their news mainly through the internet had encountered misinformation, especially related to COVID-19 and public figures, more than on average.

In Finland’s country report, the research results have been commented on by the Minister of Transport and Communications **Timo Harakka**, HS Vision’s reporter **Veera Luoma-Aho**, Kaleva Media’s Content Director **Niiles Nousuniemi**, writer and social media influencer **Emmi Nuorgam**, Professor of

Practice and reporter **Reetta Rätty** and the Head of Communications of the Prime Minister's Office **Jussi Toivanen**.

The Reuters Institute Digital News Report compares the use of news in 46 countries. The information is based on a questionnaire with approximately 2,000 respondents from each participating country. The survey is conducted annually, and Finland has been included since 2014.

Additional information

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