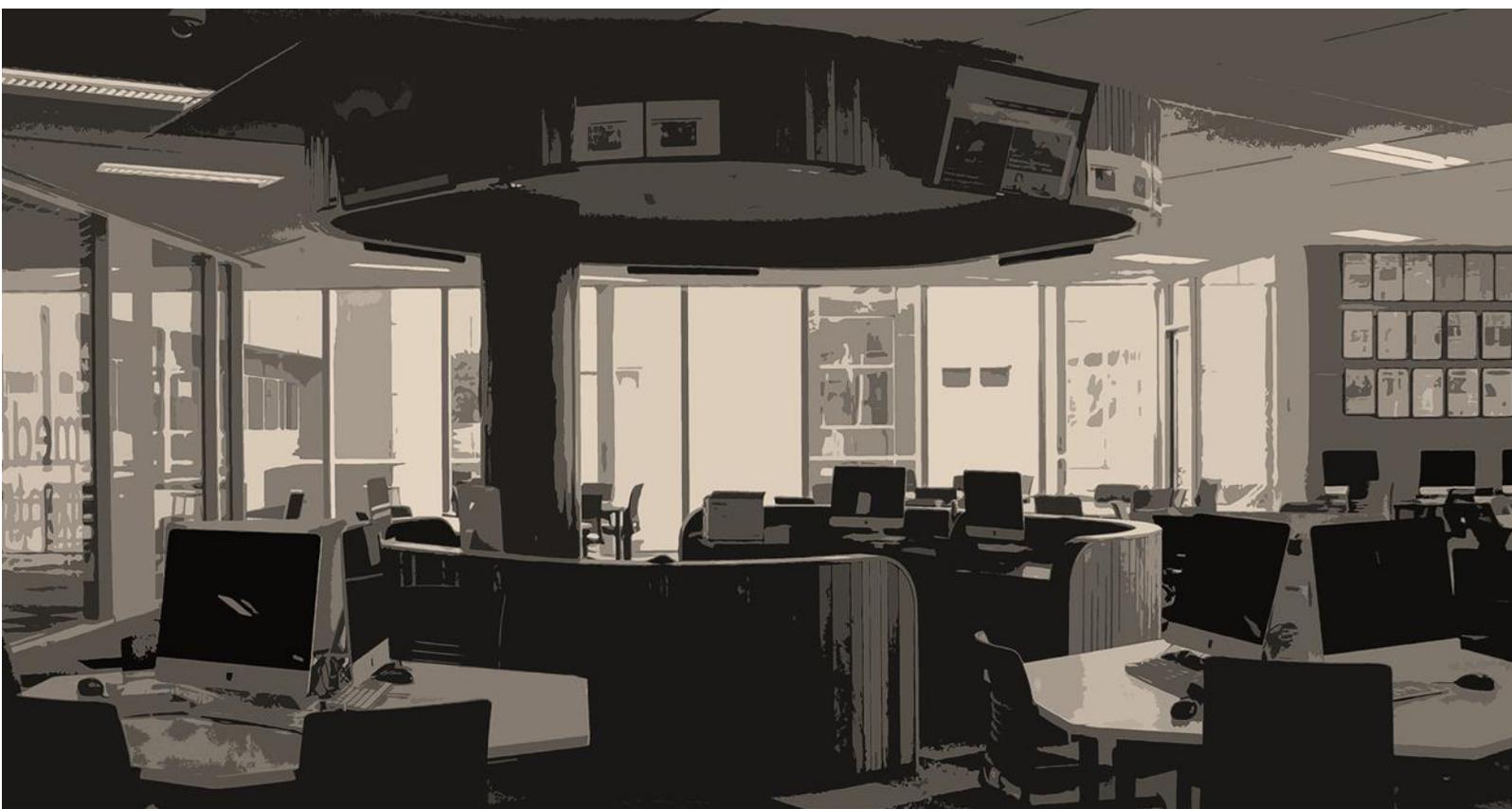


# TRUST IN NEWS IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND 2022



AUT RESEARCH CENTRE FOR  
JOURNALISM, MEDIA & DEMOCRACY

AOTEAROA

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## About this report

This is the third report about trust in news in Aotearoa New Zealand produced by the AUT research centre for [Journalism, Media and Democracy](#) (JMAD). The study behind the report is in collaboration with the [Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism](#). With permission from the institute's researchers, we have used the same survey questions to investigate trust in news and comparable sampling method used in their annual [Digital News Reports](#) to measure news trust. This allows us international comparisons about levels of trust in the news – in 2021, the Reuters survey covered 46 countries. Our 2022 survey also asked New Zealanders about their news consumption and paying for the news. Questions related to paying for news also mirror those in the Reuters study, allowing us international comparisons about news consumption and payments. As in 2021, survey data for our 2022 report was collected by New Zealand online market research company Horizon Research Ltd. The production of this report was funded by the Auckland University of Technology (AUT), and it has ethics approval from the AUT Ethics Committee (AUTEC).

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## Authorship



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**Dr Greg Treadwell** is a senior lecturer and head of journalism department at the School of Communication Studies at Auckland University of Technology (AUT). Greg's work has been published in multiple books and academic journals, including the *Journal of Applied Journalism and Media Studies*, *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator*, and *Pacific Journalism Review*. He is also a co-author of JMAD's *New Zealand Media Ownership* reports.

## Data collection and sample

This report on trust in news in Aotearoa New Zealand is the third produced by the AUT research centre for [Journalism, Media and Democracy](#) (JMAD). The first six questions concerning news trust are the same as we asked New Zealanders in 2020 and 2021, and they exactly match those asked by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism in its annual [Digital News Report](#). In January 2021, the Reuters Institute conducted a survey of 46 countries across Europe, the Americas, Asia/Pacific and Africa, and our international comparisons about news trust and news payments are made against this group. Additionally, in 2022, our survey asked questions about interest in news and news consumption and paying for the news, and these also match Reuters questions. We also surveyed New Zealanders' perceptions about journalism processes and practices.

**Sample and data:** The data for this research was collected by [Horizon Research Ltd](#), a company specialising in online polling. The results in this report are drawn from a national online survey of 1,085 New Zealand adults (18 years of age or over) who are members of a Horizon Research Ltd respondents panel and a third-party research panel, which together represent the New Zealand population at the 2018 New Zealand Census. The survey was carried out from February 22 to March 1, 2022, and has a maximum margin of error at a 95% confidence level for the total sample of  $\pm 3.0\%$

## Overview

### New Zealand context

Since our second *Trust in News in Aotearoa New Zealand* report was published in April 2021, New Zealanders have experienced lockdowns and border restrictions, have been issued vaccine passports and mandates, have encountered violent protests, have been bombarded with misinformation and have faced conspiracy theories. During late 2021 and early 2022, anti-government and anti-vaccine-mandate protests became stronger, and physical attacks against the media covering them grew frequent. In November 2021, political journalist Jason Walls wrote that “recently, there has been a stark and worrying change in the level of animosity directed at journalists”, and he was expecting things to turn worse<sup>1</sup>.

On his blog, Dr Gavin Ellis reported that journalists had been “abused, spat on, and assaulted. A *Stuff* reporter was pushed and shoved and a protester abused a Newshub news crew member and threatened to destroy his video camera.”<sup>2</sup> In November, reporters covering anti-mandate protestors at the New Zealand Parliament were “pelted with tennis balls daubed with political and anti-vax slogans”. Protestors complained that media had been “bought by the Government to do their bidding”, likely referring to the government’s recent establishment of the Public Interest Journalism Fund (PIJF) which is allocating NZ\$55 million to media over three years.<sup>3</sup> In *The Detail* podcast, Newsroom co-founder Mark Jennings said suggestions that public funding means that

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<sup>1</sup> Walls, J. “Attacks on the media are escalating and look like they’ll only get worse.” NewstalkZB, November 8, 2021. <https://www.newstalkzb.co.nz/opinion/jason-walls-attacks-on-the-media-are-escalating-and-look-like-theyll-only-get-worse/>

<sup>2</sup> Ellis, G. “Copycat media abuse from ragtag bag of protesters.” *Knightlyviews*, February 15, 2022.

<https://knightlyviews.com/2022/02/15/copycat-media-abuse-from-ragtag-bag-of-protesters/#more-2474>

<sup>3</sup> Peacock, C. “The risks of reporting displays of discontent – and amplifying aggro.” *MediaWatch*, November 14, 2021. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/national/programmes/mediawatch/audio/2018820263/the-risks-of-reporting-displays-of-discontent-and-amplifying-aggro>

news companies are “cuddling up to the government really annoy him”. He said the claims were “so misguided. We’ve gone after the Government in so many different ways.”<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, a report by research group Sapere, a consultant for the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, says while New Zealand media outlets support the public funding, some concerns have been raised about funding decisions, saying that some had “crossed into editorial decision-making, with New Zealand On Air effectively holding a ‘beauty contest’ to choose which proposed stories/investigations merited support.”<sup>5</sup>

At the same time as New Zealand journalists were under attack, disinformation kept circulating. In November 2021, the *Disinformation Project* found that conspiracy theories about Covid-19 had escalated since the Delta virus entered the country in August 2021. The report says, “the most recent Covid-19 outbreak and the vaccine are strong symbols that are being used to push various far-right and conservative views”.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, it notes that “these anti-government messages are often being imported alongside white supremacist ideologies” and that “overseas imported content is often the most violent in language.” Furthermore, it observes that online spaces “promote a lot of anti-Māori sentiment”. In February 2022, a group called Debunking Conspiracies Aotearoa called on Facebook to take stronger measures to tackle dis- and misinformation on the platform. The group said it was “pretty frustrated that no matter how many times we report harmful content to Facebook it is ignored and these recent bans are far too late as major influencers have already done

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<sup>4</sup> Russell, A. “Why the team of \$55 million is in the public interest.” The Detail. <https://www.newsroom.co.nz/podcast-the-detail/why-the-team-of-55-million-is-in-the-public-interest>

<sup>5</sup> Loan, J. Murray, K. Pauls, R. and Woock, K. (2022). The implications of competition and market trends for media plurality in New Zealand. A report for the Ministry of Culture and Heritage. <https://mch.govt.nz/sites/default/files/projects/sapere-report-media-plurality-nz-feb22.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Te Pūnaha Matatini (2021). “Understanding mis- and disinformation in Aotearoa New Zealand.” <https://www.tepunahamatatini.ac.nz/2021/11/12/understanding-disinformation-in-aotearoa/>

a lot of damage.”<sup>7</sup> According to RNZ, two leaders of anti-vaccine movements in New Zealand were temporarily banned from Facebook although the social media platform did not confirm this. RNZ says that the Outdoor Party co-leader Sue Grey and Derek Tait, a Destiny Church pastor, were temporarily taken down from Facebook.

As we reported in our 2021 report, trust in the New Zealand Government in 2020 was high, with approximately 83% of New Zealanders agreeing that the Government was trustworthy. Additionally, over 85% had confidence in the country’s public-health scientists.<sup>8</sup> In December 2021, 81% of New Zealanders trusted public services “based on their personal experience”.<sup>9</sup> When compared internationally, New Zealand “ranks as a world-leader in trust and confidence in government.” According to the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), New Zealanders trust more in their public institutions than the citizens of other OECD countries (on average).<sup>10</sup> In 2018, 43% of New Zealanders trusted Parliament and 54% trusted the Government compared to 34% and 37% OECD averages, respectively.

A report from Koi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures warns that while New Zealand has a relatively high trust in the government, the public response to its vaccination effort and mandates has shown that trust is not universal and can disappear quickly.<sup>11</sup> Dr Charles Royal (Marutūahu, Ngāti Raukawa and Ngā Puhī), Strategic Advisor and a member of Koi Tū, points out that social

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<sup>7</sup> Calls for Facebook to take stronger action on Covid-19 misinformation as antivax leaders banned. RNZ, February 1, 2022. <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/460683/calls-for-facebook-to-take-stronger-action-on-covid-19-misinformation-as-antivax-leaders-banned>

<sup>8</sup> Goldfinch, S., Taplin, R. and Gauld, R. 2021. Trust in government increased during the Covid-19 pandemic in Australia and New Zealand. *Australian Journal of Public Administration*. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1467-8500.12459>

<sup>9</sup> Public Service Commission (n.d). Trust and confidence in the public service. <https://www.publicservice.govt.nz/our-work/trust-and-confidence-in-the-public-service/>

<sup>10</sup> OECD. (2021). Government at a glance 2021. Country fact sheet. New Zealand. <https://www.oecd.org/gov/gov-at-a-glance-2021-new-zealand.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Gluckman, P., Bardsley, An., Spoonley, P., Royal, C., Simon-Kumar, N. and Chen, A. (2021). Sustaining Aotearoa New Zealand as a cohesive society. Koi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures. <https://informedfutures.org/wp-content/uploads/Sustaining-Aotearoa-New-Zealand-as-a-cohesive-society.pdf>

cohesion comes down to trust – “a concept that is complex and nuanced.”<sup>12</sup> He says “Māori communities are challenged by questions of trust as much as anyone else. Māori trust in the Government, for example, has long been tempered by the negative effects of colonisation for which Māori hold the Government accountable.” Interestingly, New Zealand media shows some discontent with public services, finding that it is increasingly difficult to hold the Government and its institutions accountable. In an opinion piece, *The Dominion Post* editor Anna Fifield expressed some frustration, asking “when did our public service get so arrogant?”<sup>13</sup> She writes that she was shocked returning to New Zealand after two decades reporting overseas, at “just how obstructive and deliberately untransparent our public service has become.” She says that because journalists have been “outnumbered by spin doctors”, it is increasingly hard for journalists to obtain information or gain access to the people working in public services, including ministers. In late 2021 and early 2022, the popularity of Jacinda Ardern’s Government seem to be declining. The Talbot Mills Research poll showed that Labour Party’s popularity dropped five points to 41%, and the poll by Curia Polling showed that 39% of New Zealanders supported Labour.<sup>14</sup> *The Guardian* noted that while the polling results place Labour Party still “firmly ahead of the opposition National Party, it represents Labour’s worst polling result in more than a year, and since before Covid-19 reached New Zealand.”

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<sup>12</sup> Koi Tū: The Centre for Informed Futures. “Sustaining social cohesion in Aotearoa New Zealand”. [Media release], December 13, 2021. <https://informedfutures.org/media-release-social-cohesion/>

<sup>13</sup> Fifield, A. “When did our public service get so arrogant?” *Stuff*, February 5, 2022.

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/opinion/127682814/when-did-our-public-service-get-so-arrogant>

<sup>14</sup> McClure, T. “Jacinda Ardern’s popularity plunges as New Zealand reckons with new era of endemic Covid.” *The Guardian*, November 11, 2021. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/11/jacinda-arderns-popularity-plunges-as-new-zealand-reckons-with-new-era-of-endemic-covid>

## International context

The *Edelman Trust Barometer 2022* report shows that globally, trust in government and media declined in 2022, with 52% of people trusting their government and 50% trusting their media.<sup>15</sup> Comparatively, in May 2020, government was the most trusted source of information at 65%, followed by business (62%), NGOs (62%) and media (56%). Edelman CEO Richard Edelman says governments and media are the “two institutions people rely on for truth”, yet they are “doing a dangerous tango of short-term mutual advantage, with exaggeration and division to gain clicks and votes.”<sup>16</sup> Edelman says the media “needs to get back to a business model that replaces outrage with sobriety, clickbait with calm authority.” The barometer shows 67% of people believe journalists are lying to them. Additionally, government and media were seen as dividing forces in society. Concerns for fake news were “all-time high” with 76% of people worrying about false information. It argues government and media are feeding a cycle of division and disinformation for votes and clicks, with 42% of people distrusting government leaders and 46% journalists.

The *Reuters Digital News Report 2021* observes that in 2021, trust in news grew by 6% compared to 2020, with 44% of people surveyed trusting most of the news most of the time.<sup>17</sup> The Reuters survey included 46 countries, and for the first time data from India, Indonesia, Thailand, Nigeria, Colombia, and Peru was collected. The report observes that an increase in trust “reverses, to some extent, recent falls in average trust – bringing levels back to those of 2018.” Of the countries

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<sup>15</sup> Edelman (2022) *Edelman Trust Barometer 2022*. [https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2022-01/Trust%2022\\_Top10.pdf](https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2022-01/Trust%2022_Top10.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Edelman. “2022 Edelman Trust Barometer Reveals Even Greater Expectations of Business to Lead as Government Trust Continues to Spiral.” [Media release], January 19, 2022: <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/2022-edelman-trust-barometer-reveals-even-greater-expectations-of-business-to-lead-as-government-trust-continues-to-spiral-301463922.html>

<sup>17</sup> Newman, N., Fletcher, R., Schulz, A., Andi, S., Robertson, C. and R.K. Nielsen. *Reuters Digital News Report 2021*. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. 10th edition. <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2021/dnr-executive-summary>

surveyed, Finland continued to have the highest levels of overall trust in the news (65%), and the USA had the lowest level of trust (29%). The Reuters survey observes that trust in news from search engines and social media remained stable, meaning that the “trust gap between the news in general and that found in aggregated environments has grown – with audiences seemingly placing a greater premium on accurate and reliable news sources.” However, the use of social media for news has continued to be strong especially with younger age groups.

The Reuters report also notes that while many consumers remain engaged with the news, there are “signs that others are turning away from the news media and in some cases avoiding news altogether.” On the other hand, there has been a “significant increase in payment for online news in a small number of richer Western countries.” Nevertheless, the overall percentage of people paying for online news has remained low. In 20 countries observed, 17% have paid for any online news in the last year – up to two percentage points. In Norway, 45% of those surveyed have paid for online news, followed by Sweden (30%), the US (21%) and Finland (20%). The report notes that the progress has been slow in France (11%), Germany (9%), and the UK (8%).

Additionally, a report of Pew Research Centre in the United States shows that Americans’ confidence in specific groups and social institutions declined sharply in 2021. In 2020, 40% of Americans had a great deal of confidence in medical scientists, but in 2021 figure was 21%.<sup>18</sup> The public confidence in journalists, business leaders and elected officials also shrunk. In 2020, 45% of Americans had a great or fair deal of confidence in journalists. In comparison, in 2021 40% reported that they trusted journalists a fair or great amount. In 2021, approximately 24% of Americans had confidence in their elected officials.

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<sup>18</sup> Kennedy, B., Tyson, A. and Funk, C. (2022). “American’s trust in scientists, other groups declines.” Pew Research Centre. <https://www.pewresearch.org/science/2022/02/15/americans-trust-in-scientists-other-groups-declines/>

## Key findings 2022

### Trust in news in New Zealand

- General trust in news in New Zealand is, worryingly, still shrinking, and trust in news in search is falling. However, trust in news in social media is stable and slightly increased in 2022.
- In three years from 2020-2022, general trust in news has fallen 8% from 53% to 45%.
- In 2022, 45% of New Zealanders trusted news, compared to 48% in 2021, and 53% in 2020.
- Trust in news people consume themselves has declined even more than the general trust, 10% in the past three years. In 2022, 52% of New Zealanders trusted news they consumed themselves, compared to 55% in 2021 and 62% in 2020.
- RNZ has remained the most trusted news brand, despite a steep decline in brand trust. The *Otago Daily Times*, included in the survey for the first time, was the second most trusted news brand in 2022, followed by TVNZ and Newshub.
- In 2022, trust in the news brands of Te Whakaruruhau o Ngā Reo Irirangi Māori (National Māori Radio Network), Māori TV and TVNZ declined more than 10% compared to the previous year.
- Trust in Newstalk ZB and *The Spinoff* remained stable, trust in the news on *Stuff* dropped approximately 5% and in the *NZ Herald* 8%.

**Table 1: Trust in news in New Zealand in 2020, 2021, 2022 (%)**

	2020	2021	2022	Change % 2020-2022	Change % 2021-2022
Overall trust in news	53%	48%	45%	-8%	-3%
Trust in news I use	62%	55%	52%	-10%	-3%
Trust in news in search	27%	26%	23%	-4%	-3%
Trust in news in social	16%	14%	15%	-1%	+1%

## Trust in news compared internationally

- When compared internationally, trust in news in New Zealand has fallen, whereas internationally news has gained in trust.
- The [Reuters Digital News Report 2021](#) shows that in 2021, trust in news grew 6% in 46 countries surveyed. At the same time, trust in news in New Zealand shrunk 3% during a comparable period.
- Trust in news in general in New Zealand is just above the international average, showing that the trust gap between our country and the average of those surveyed by Reuters is closing.

**Table 2: Trust in news internationally and in New Zealand 2020-2021**

	Reuters 2019	Reuters 2020	Reuters 2021	Change 2020-21 %	JMAD 2020	JMAD 2021	JMAD 2022	Change % 2021-22
	Int. average	Int. average	Int. average	Int. average	NZ	NZ	NZ	NZ
Overall trust in news	42%	38%	44%	+6%	53%	48%	45%	-3%
Trust in news I use	49%	46%	50%	+4%	62%	55%	52%	-3%
Trust news in search	33%	32%	34%	+2%	27%	26%	23%	-3%
Trust news in social	23%	22%	24%	+2%	16%	14%	15%	+1%

## News interest and paying for the news

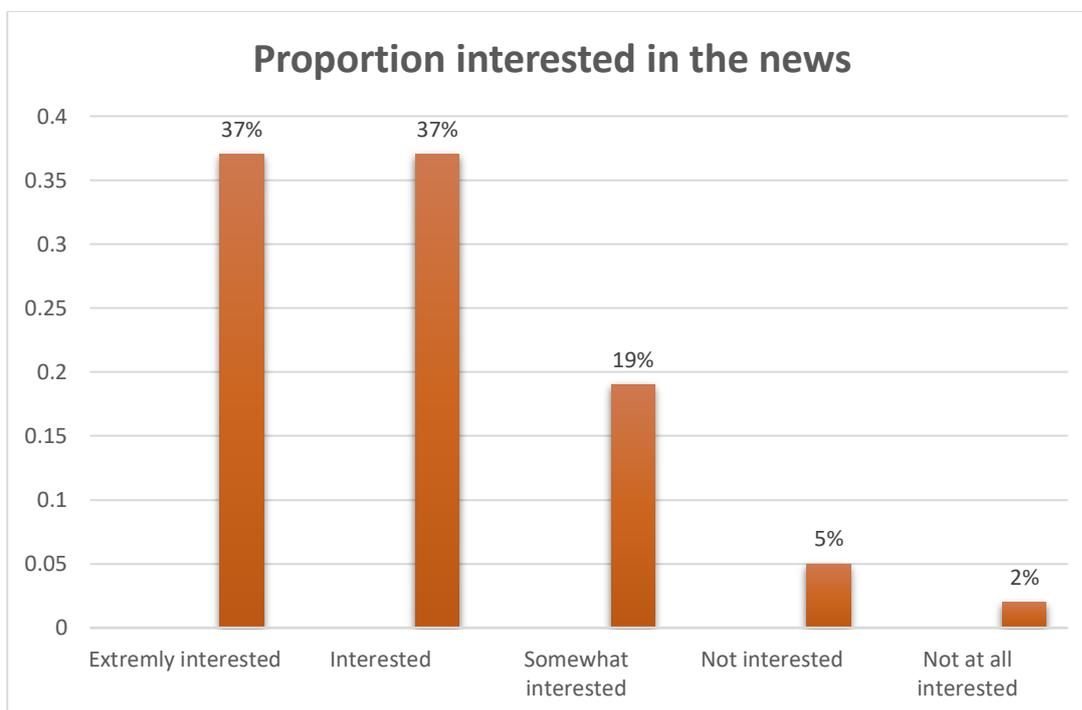
- In 2022, we asked New Zealanders for the first time to comment on their interest in the news and paying for news.
- Approximately 75% of New Zealanders are interested or extremely interested in the news, with 7% of people not interested in the news, including 2% not interested at all.
- TVNZ (64%) and Stuff online (64%) were the most used sources of news; social media was a source of news for 43% of those surveyed.
- In 2022, 22% of New Zealanders had paid for online news content or accessed a paid online news service. Additionally, 36% of respondents said that they had financially supported news services.

## Detailed findings

### Interest and consumption of news

In 2022, we scoped for the first time New Zealanders' interest in the news (**Q1**).<sup>19</sup>Based on our sample, 74% of New Zealanders are interested or extremely interested in the news. Additionally, 19% are somewhat interested in the news. As seen in figure 1, only 7% of those surveyed said they were not interested in the news.

Figure 1: Proportion of those interested in the news in 2022



<sup>19</sup> **Q1.** Overall, how interested would you say you are in news? 1 extremely interested/2 interested/3 somewhat interested/4 not interested/5 not interested at all.

Additionally, in 2022, we asked New Zealanders about their sources of news (**Q2**<sup>20</sup>). Based on our sample, TVNZ and *Stuff* were mentioned as a source of the news by 64% of those surveyed. This was followed by Newshub/TV Three (49%), NZ Herald online (48%) and RNZ (32%). Approximately 43% of those responding named social media as a source of news (table 3).

**Table 3: Sources of news in the past week**

Source of the news	% of those surveyed
TVNZ	64%
Stuff online	64%
Newshub/TV Three	49%
NZ Herald online	48%
Social media	43%
RNZ	32%
Other online news sites	31%
Commercial radio	21%
Printed newspapers	19%
Alternative news sites	13%

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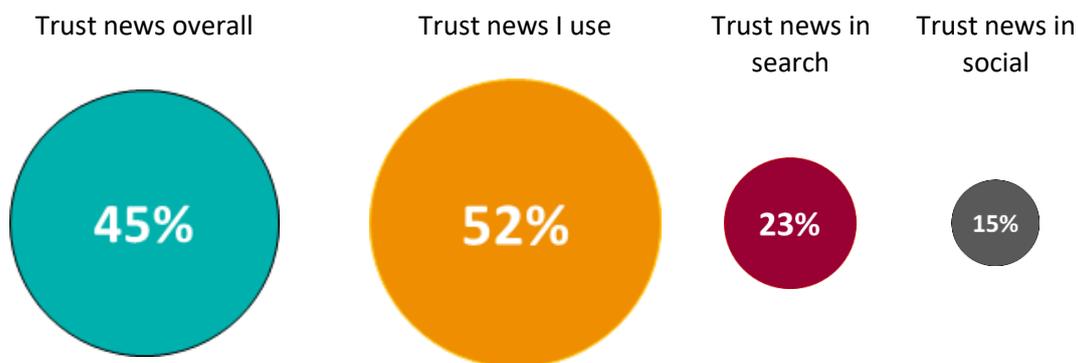
<sup>20</sup> **Q2.** Which, if any, of the following have you used in the past week as a source of news?  
 TVNZ/Newshub/RNZ/Commercial radio/Indigenous media/NZ Herald online/Stuff online/Other online news sites/Printed newspapers/Alternative news sites/Blogs/Social media/None of these.

## Overall trust in news and news brands

Q3<sup>21</sup> asked New Zealanders about both their trust in the news generally and their trust in the news they consumed, and Q4<sup>22</sup> asked about their trust in the news found via social media and search engines. Based on our sample, in 2022, trust in the news in general dropped 3% from 48% in 2021 to 45% in 2022. However, in the three years of 2020-2022, trust in the news in general declined 8%, from 53% to 45%.

In 2022, trust in the news people consume themselves fell 3% from 55% in 2021 to 52% in 2022. However, in the three years of 2020-2022, trust in the news people consumed themselves declined 10%, from 62% in 2020 to 52% in 2022.

Figure 2: Proportion that trust most news most of the time in 2022



While trying to understand the reasons for the decline of trust in the news in general, in the news consumed and in news brands, some qualitative comments from respondents may give some guidance. One hundred and eighty-two people supplied comments to the survey, and of those, 83

<sup>21</sup> Q3. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements: a) I think you can trust most news most of the time b) I think I can trust most of the news I consume most of the time: 1 strongly disagree/2 tend to disagree/3 neither agree nor disagree/4 tend to agree/5 strongly agree.

<sup>22</sup> Q4. It is now possible to get online news in many different ways, including from search engines and social media sites. With this in mind, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. a) I think I can trust news in social media most of the time b) I think I can trust news in search engines most of the time: 1 strongly disagree/2 tend to disagree/3 neither agree nor disagree/4 tend to agree/5 strongly agree.

were linked to respondents' reasons for not trusting the media. Approximately 26% of those commenters said they didn't trust the media because it was funded by the Government, and because the media was reporting the Government's narrative and was politically influenced by it. Additionally, 2.7% mentioned news reporting on Covid-pandemic, health information and vaccine mandates as a reason for their mistrust. Approximately 13.2% mentioned media spin, bias and opinions as a reason for distrust, and 3.8% did not trust the media because it was not reporting factual information. Here is a sample of typical comments:

*"The greatest danger to news media in NZ is government funds and grants, as they "buy" the journalists and editors. Another danger is allowing interview access only to compliant journalists." - Male, 55-64 years, Other/European*

*"I am disgusted that we are unable to trust the mainstream media, who are now just the propaganda wing of the government. In interviews no interviewer asks the hard questions for fear of losing funding from the government." - Female, 65-74 years*

*"NZ news is sadly in the pocket of government and therefore not balanced - very sad for our country." - Female, 45-54 years, Pasifika*

*"All media tends to put their spin on the news. It would be far better for the facts only. The government should NOT be funding news outlets in any way." - Male, 55-64 years, NZ European/Pākehā*

*"I have noticed since Covid began the media aren't asking the government the tough questions, it feels like the media are in bed with the government and there is only one narrative being talked about. I don't trust mainstream media a single bit!" - Female, 35-44 years, NZ European/Pākehā*

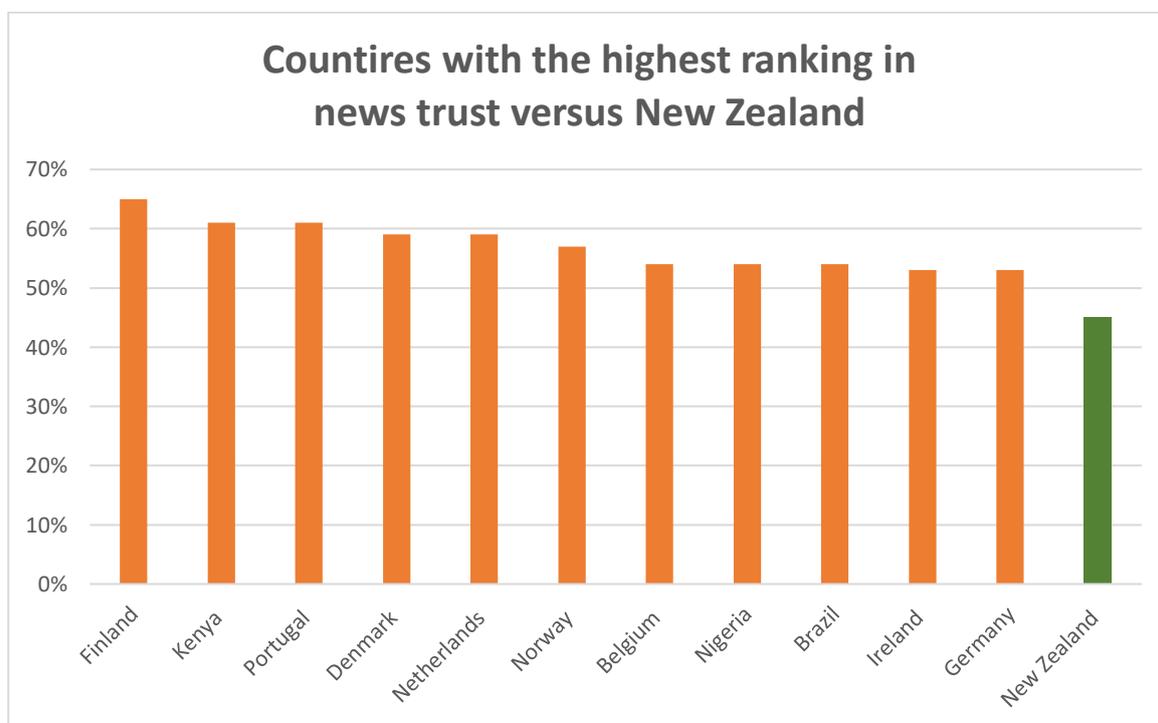
*"I think the media needs to be way more balanced and far less opinion and controversy based. It is very damaging. Headlines should be less misleading as well. I hate it!" - Female, 35-44 years, NZ European/Pākehā*

*"Less journalistic opinion, please. Give both sides of the story and let us work it out for ourselves. Over the last five years, many stories have been one-sided with any alternative voice being dismissed. That's largely why I choose not to pay for print or online media." - Female, 45-54 years, Other*

*"New Zealand has far too many right-wing and or conservative commentators in its newspapers. There is no balance. I want authoritative responsible and ethical journalism. I don't need or want to hear more privileged white male reckons." - Female, 55-64 years,*

When compared to the international average of 46 countries, our data shows the trust gap between New Zealand and the rest of the world has shrunk to 1%. On average, 44% of people surveyed in 2021 by Reuters trusted most news most of the time compared to 45% in New Zealand. In the previous year, the trust gap between New Zealand and the international average was 5%. In 2021, Reuters recorded a 6% uptake in trust in the news whereas New Zealand saw a drop of 3% in our latest survey. The year before, trust in the comparable international market fell 4%, so perhaps the New Zealand downturn has occurred a year later than in other countries. In 2021, trust in the news was highest in Finland with 65% trusting the news. This was followed by Kenya (61%), Portugal (61%), Denmark (59%) and Norway (57%). Croatia, Singapore and Canada had the same level of trust in the news as New Zealand (45%).

Figure 3: The proportion that trusts most news most of the time



Sources: Reuters Digital News Report 2021, JMAD Trust in the News in Aotearoa New Zealand 2022

**Q5**<sup>23</sup> asked about the trustworthiness of prominent New Zealand news outlets. Using a scale of 0-10, where 0 was not trustworthy at all and 10 completely trustworthy, respondents were asked to rate their level of trust in 14 news brands. Mean scores were calculated from those who knew of each source, with those who were not aware of a brand excluded. Our data shows that TVNZ, NZ Herald, Stuff and Newshub have the highest brand recognition, whereas *Crux*, *Interest.co.nz* and *BusinessDesk* have the lowest brand recognition. In 2022, the *Otago Daily Times*, *BusinessDesk* and *Crux* were included in the survey for the first time. The *Otago Daily Times* is owned by South Island media company Allied Press (independent), *BusinessDesk* is owned by NZME, while *Crux* operates in Wanaka and Queenstown and is owned by *Crux Publishing Ltd* (independent).

As seen in table 4, in 2022, most of the news brands included saw declines in trust when compared to the previous year. Only *The Spinoff* and *Newstalk ZB* maintained their trust levels at the 2021 level. In 2022, the iwi radio network *Te Whakaruruhau o Ngā Reo Irirangi Māori* (12.3%) and *Māori TV* (11.1%) saw the steepest drops in trust; they were followed by TVNZ (10.6%) and RNZ (8.8%). RNZ, however, remained the most trusted brand out of those included. Trust in the *NZ Herald*, *Newsroom* and *Newshub* fell approximately 8%, and *Stuff* 5%. In the three years from 2020-2022, broadcasters TVNZ, *Newshub*, RNZ and *Newsroom* have seen the biggest drops – over 10%. During the same period, the *NZ Herald*, *Newstalk ZB* and *Stuff* also experienced significant declines in trust.

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<sup>23</sup> **Q5.** How trustworthy would you say news from the following brands is? Please use the scale below, where 0 is 'not at all trustworthy' and 10 is 'completely trustworthy'. NZ Herald/Stuff/Newshub/TVNZ/Newsroom/The Spinoff/Crux/Interest.co.nz/RNZ/Newstalk ZB/ Māori Television/Iwi radio stations/Otago Daily Times/BusinessDesk.

**Table 4: Trust score (0-10) for New Zealand news brands**

Brand	Trust score 2020	Trust score 2021	Trust score 2022	Change % 2021-2022	Change % in 2020-2022
RNZ	7.0	6.8	6.2	-8.8%	-11.4%
Otago Daily Times	(not included)	(not included)	6.0	n.a	n.a
TVNZ	6.8	6.6	5.9	-10.6%	-13.2%
Newshub	6.6	6.3	5.8	-7.9%	-12.1%
Newsroom	6.4	6.2	5.7	-8.0%	-10.9%
NZ Herald	6.3	6.2	5.7	-8.0%	-9.5%
Stuff	6.1	6.0	5.7	-5.0%	-6.6%
Newstalk ZB	6.2	5.7	5.7	No change	-8.0%
Māori TV	(not included)	6.3	5.6	-11.1%	n.a
Interest.co.nz	(not included)	5.7	5.5	-3.5%	n.a
BusinessDesk	(not included)	(not included)	5.3	n.a	n.a
The Spinoff	5.4	5.2	5.2	No change	-3.7%
Iwi Radio	(not included)	5.7	5.0	-12.3%	n.a
Crux	(not included)	(not included)	4.4	n.a	n.a

## Paying for news

In 2022, we asked New Zealanders for the first time about paying for news. **Q9** asked if people have paid for news<sup>24</sup>, what kind of payments they had made<sup>25</sup>, which news brands they had backed financially<sup>26</sup>, which news brands they would be supporting over the next year<sup>27</sup>, how much they would be willing to pay for news<sup>28</sup>, and what price they regarded as too expensive<sup>29</sup>. Approximately 22% of respondents said they had paid for online news content, or accessed a paid-for online news service in the past year. Additionally, 36% had financially supported news organisations in the past year, and 33% were planning to continue their support. Digital-only (13%) and print-only (12%) subscriptions were equally popular ways to pay for news, with an additional 8% of respondents using both methods. Additionally, 12% of respondents had either monthly or annual membership (6%) of a news outlet or were donating a fixed amount (6%) to it (figure 3).

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<sup>24</sup> **Q9.** Have you paid for online news content, or accessed a paid-for online news service in the past year? (This could be a digital subscription, combined digital/print subscription or one-off payment for an article or app or e-edition). Yes/No.

<sup>25</sup> **Q9a.** In which of these ways, if any, have you paid for news services you value in the past year? Print newspaper subscription only/ Digital and print newspaper subscription/ Digital subscription only/ Monthly or annual membership/ Donation (fixed amount)/ None of these/ Other (please specify).

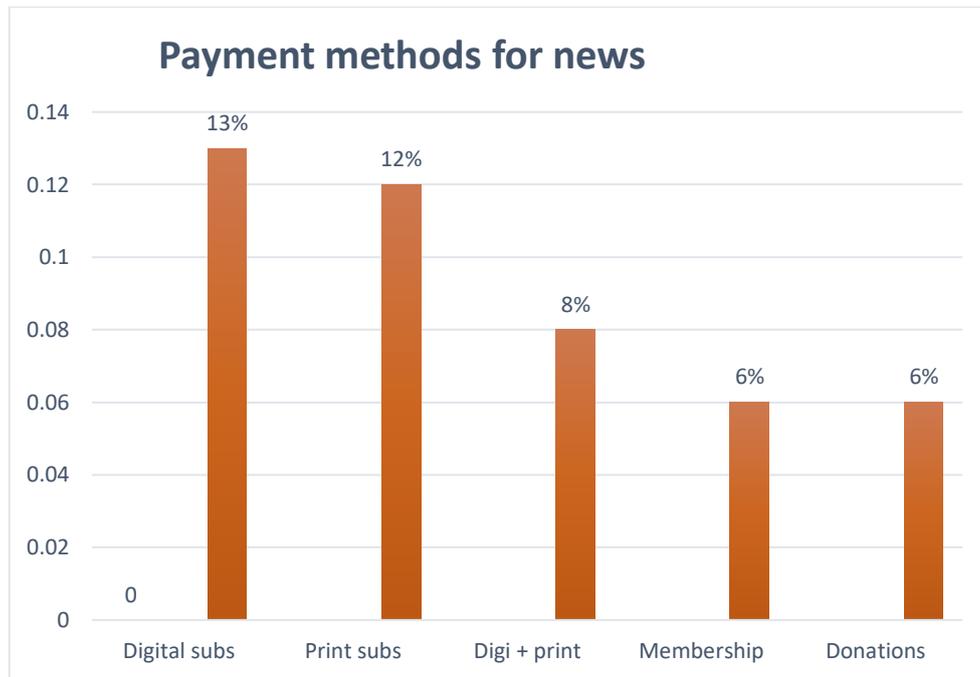
<sup>26</sup> **Q9b.** Which of these news services have you supported financially in any way during the past year? *The NZ Herald/ The Dominion Post/ The Otago Daily Times/ The Press/ The Spinoff/ The Newsroom/ Scoop/ NBR/ Stuff/ BusinessDesk/ Reuters/ Bloomberg/ Other (please specify).*

<sup>27</sup> **Q9c.** Which of these news services, if any, will you support financially in any way during the next year? *The NZ Herald/ The Dominion Post/ The Otago Daily Times/ The Press/ The Spinoff/ The Newsroom/ Scoop/ NBR/ Stuff/ BusinessDesk/ Reuters/ Bloomberg/ Other (please specify).*

<sup>28</sup> **Q9d.** Thinking of an online news service that you value (either website or streaming), what would be good value for you to pay each month to have access to it? (Please type in dollars and cents, and if you wouldn't pay anything you can put 0)

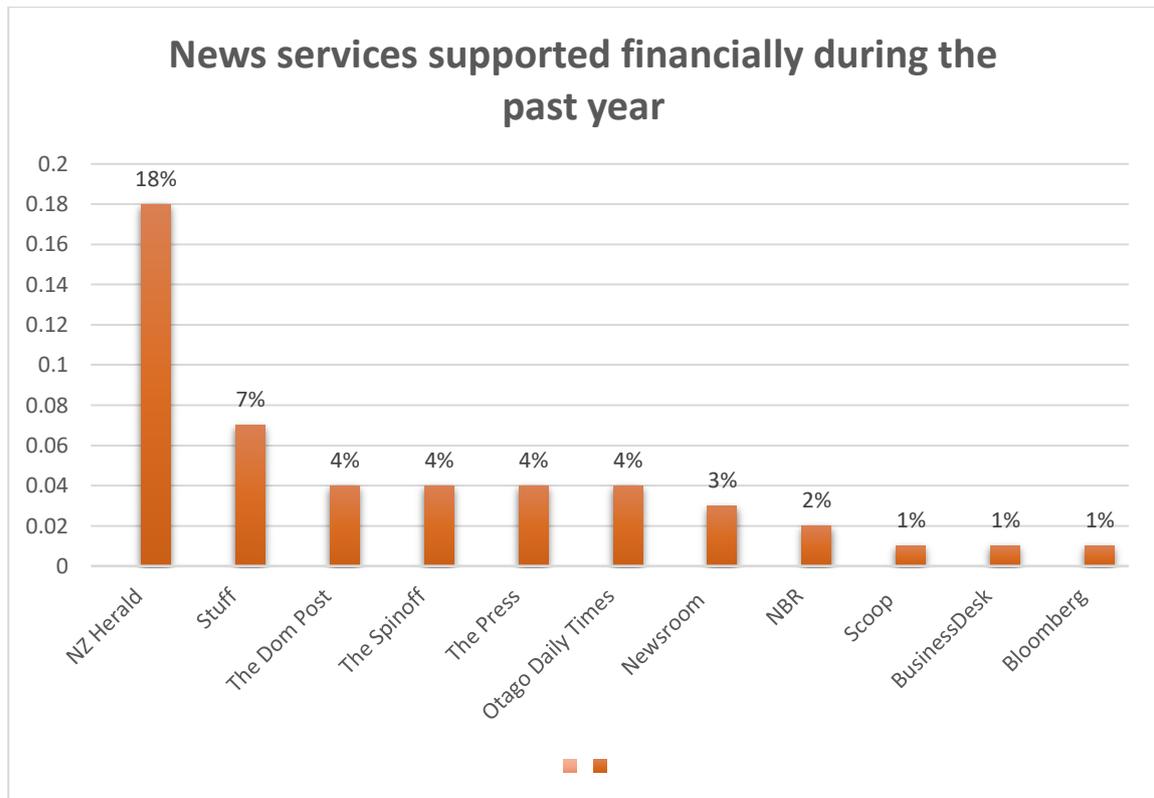
<sup>29</sup> **Q9e.** And what would be a little too expensive to pay for it? (Please type in dollars and cents, and if you wouldn't pay anything you can put 0)

Figure 4: Payment methods for the online and print news



As seen in figure 4, 18% of those surveyed financially supported the *NZ Herald* which requires paid subscriptions for its premium content. *Stuff* does not have digital subscriptions, but it has a donation model and 7% of those surveyed have supported it financially. *NBR*, *BusinessDesk*, Bloomberg and Reuters have digital subscriptions to their news and services; *Newsroom* has subscriptions for its Newsroom Pro content, and *Scoop* has licensed some of its services. *Newsroom* and *The Spinoff* also have membership/donations options. *The NZ Herald* has also print subscriptions, and *The Dominion Post*, *Press* and the *Otago Daily Times* have print subscriptions.

Figure 5: Proportion of those who have paid or supported the news



Some of those surveyed said they cannot afford to pay for the news or that they are not paying for it because of concerns about the quality of information in the news:

*"I miss quite a lot of news as it is labelled premium and has to be paid for. We cannot afford so I look elsewhere."*

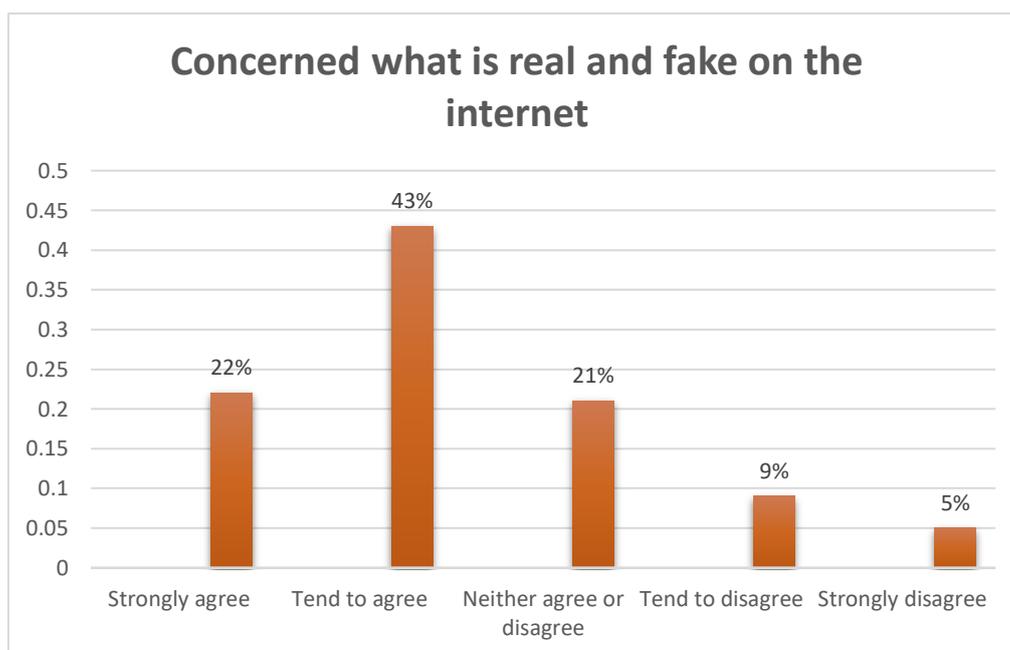
*"I am so concerned that we are not receiving factual information that I am not prepared to pay for any news."*

*"I don't think important news about our nation should be trapped behind a paywall."*

## Concerns of misinformation

Q6<sup>30</sup> asked New Zealanders whether they were concerned about what was real and what was fake news on the internet. Based on our sample, 65% of the respondents were concerned about what is real or fake on the internet compared to 68% in 2021. Approximately 14% of those surveyed were not concerned about the quality of the content on the internet.

Figure 6: Proportion of those concerned with misinformation and fake news



Q8<sup>31</sup> asked who should do more to help separate misinformation more clearly from real information. Based on our sample, 66% of respondents think that technology companies, including

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<sup>30</sup> Q6. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "Thinking about online news, I am concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet." 1 Strongly disagree/2 tend to disagree/3 neither agree nor disagree/4 tend to agree/5 strongly agree.

<sup>31</sup> Q8. Any action to decrease/reduce the amount of "misinformation" (in the media or in social media) is likely to have the consequence of reducing, to some extent, the range of real or legitimate news or opinion available. With this in mind, please indicate your agreement with the following statements: Technology companies (e.g. Facebook and Google) should do more to make it easier to separate what is real and what is fake on the internet/Media companies and journalists should do more to make it easier to separate what is real and what is fake on the internet/Government should do more to make it easier to separate what is real and fake on the internet.

Google and Facebook, should do more to separate what is real and what is fake on the internet. In 2021, 73% agreed that it is the responsibility of these companies to tackle misinformation on the internet. In 2022, 74% of respondents agreed that media companies and journalists should do more to make it easier to separate what is real and what is fake on the internet (79% in 2021), and 57% agreed that the Government should do more to make it easier to separate what is real and what is fake on the internet (down from 62%).

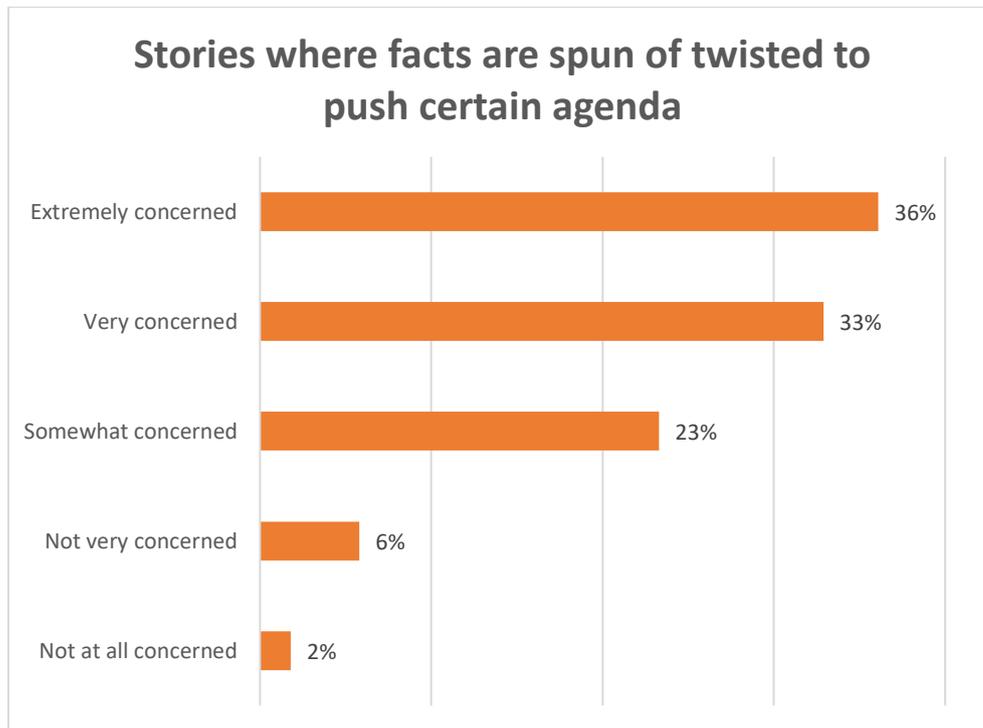
### **Concerns related to journalism and news processes**

**Q7<sup>32</sup>** asked to what extent respondents were concerned about poor journalism (stories with spin or twisted facts, stories made up for political or commercial reasons, or satirical stories that are simply made up), and the use of the term ‘fake news’. Similarly to 2021, 91% of respondents were concerned about poor journalism. However, the proportion of those who were “extremely concerned” increased from 23% in 2021 to 27% in 2022. Approximately 92% of respondents were concerned about “stories where facts are spun or twisted to push a particular agenda”, down slightly compared to 2021 (94%). However, those “extremely concerned” rose from 30% to 36% at the same time, showing the level of those who have a high level of concern is rising. From our sample, 90% of respondents said they were concerned about “stories that are completely made up for political or commercial reasons that look like news stories but turn out to be advertisements.” This proportion was unchanged from 2021. Approximately 86% of respondents were concerned about the use of the term “fake news”, also the same as in 2021.

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<sup>32</sup> **Q7.** To what extent, if at all, are you concerned about the following: Poor journalism (factual mistakes, dumbed down stories, misleading headlines/clickbait)/Stories where facts are spun or twisted to push a particular agenda/Stories that are completely made up for political or commercial reasons that look like news stories but turn out to be advertisements/Stories that are completely made up to make people laugh (satire)/term fake news. Scale: Not at all concerned/Not very concerned/Somewhat concerned/Very concerned/Extremely concerned.

Figure 7: Proportion of those who are concerned of spin and bias



For the first time, our survey also asked questions about respondents' knowledge of journalistic processes (Q10<sup>33</sup>). Q11<sup>34</sup> and Q12<sup>35</sup> asked about the neutrality of reporting, as well as biases and opinions in news reporting. When commenting on neutrality, many respondents felt this way:

*"Increasingly general news stories in print or TV (especially TVNZ) are heavily politically biased/edited, not balanced nor well researched. TVNZ reporters are too often stating their opinions instead of reporting the news these days. Hence increasingly labelled as 'govt' news channels." - Male, 45-54 years, NZ European/Pākehā*

<sup>33</sup> Q10. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement: "I have a reasonable understanding of the processes involved in the gathering and publication of a news story." Strongly agree/ Tend to disagree/ Neither agree nor disagree/ Tend to agree/ Strongly agree/ Don't know.

<sup>34</sup> Q11. Thinking about the news in general in your country, when news outlets report on social and political issues, which of the following comes closest to your view? News outlets should try to be neutral on every issue/ There are some issues where it makes no sense for news outlets to try to be neutral/ Don't know.

<sup>35</sup> Q12. Thinking about the balance of a news story, should strongly controversial opinion-leaders always be given equal space in news to those who oppose their radical positions? Yes/ No. 12.1 You said strongly controversial opinion-leaders should not be given equal space. Why is that? 12.2 You said strongly controversial opinion-leaders should be given equal space. Why is that?

*"The news shouldn't be based on opinion. The only reason media companies' opinion is to generate clicks, in my opinion. Unfortunately, they need the clicks to generate ads revenue. It's sad and not contributing to accurate reporting." - Female, 35-44 years, NZ European/Pākehā*

*"Balanced reporting gives people more faith in the media, and allows people to make fully informed decisions on issues." - Male, 55-64 years, NZ European/Pākehā*

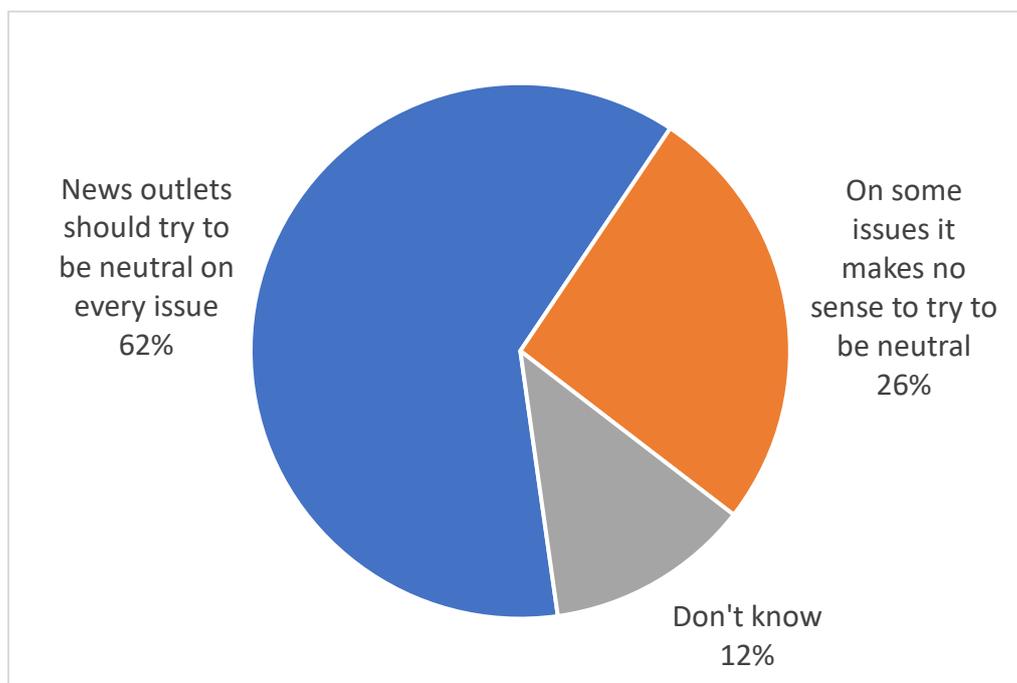
Based on our sample, roughly half agree they have a reasonable understanding of the processes involved in the gathering and publication of a news story (52%), and 19% believe they don't have a reasonable understanding of how the news is produced. A survey participant, who happened to be a former journalist, commented:

*"As a former journalist, I think that most New Zealanders do not understand how journalism works and don't know the difference between news and opinion." - Female, 35-44 years, NZ European/Pākehā*

When asked about the neutrality of news reporting on social and political issues, 62% of those responding said that journalists should be neutral on every issue they report on. Approximately 26% believed that it does not make sense to be neutral in some issues.

During the Covid-pandemic crisis, many controversial opinion leaders have expressed their opinions through the media or during the protests campaigns. In our survey, just under half of the people think strongly that controversial opinion-leaders should be given equal space in the news compared to those who oppose their radical positions (43%). Those who say they don't really know is almost one-third (29%). Those who believed that controversial voices should be heard, said that in a democratic society, all voices should be heard, especially then when the issue is important to the people they represent.

Figure 8: Proportion of those who believe that news should be neutral



*"If there is a legitimate case for a controversial opinion-leader to weigh in on an issue that relates to them or the people they represent, then its important they are given airtime. This is particularly important in any pluralist democracy to avoid tyranny of the majority. For example, in New Zealand it is of utmost importance that the views of minority cultures are represented in the media. - Male, 35-44 years, Māori/NZ European/Pākehā*

*"I'd like my news to be straight down the middle, giving accounts from both sides of the argument so I can make a decision on what I take from it." - Male, 25-34 years,*

*"All opinions are valid, even controversial ones. I think people need to research and ask questions and determine facts for themselves. News should be factual and intellectually stimulating. Not dumbed down for the sheep and brainwashed lemmings to fit controlled narratives or agendas." - Male, 45-54 years, NZ European/Pākehā*

Those who said that controversial opinion-leaders should not be given equal space in the media said that:

*"It is fundamentally wrong to promote white supremacy, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, and anti-science sentiment in New Zealand." - Female, 18-24 years, NZ European/Pākehā*

*"Because they often say things that are untrue and cause people to feel unwarranted fear, resentment and anxiety, and they can be a danger to public health and safety. They divide and polarise society, which is harmful to everyone." - Female, 55-64 years, NZ European/Pākeha*



Based at the Auckland University of Technology's School of Communication Studies, the [Journalism, Media and Democracy](#) research centre (JMAD) was established in 2010 to promote research and advance knowledge about the media and communication industries, news, and journalism professional practices. Since 2011, JMAD has published ten annual *New Zealand Media Ownership* reports which track changes in media ownership and key trends and events in New Zealand media. Furthermore, since 2020, JMAD has produced three *Trust in News in New Zealand* reports. Additionally, since 2014 AUT Media Observatory has provided regular measurement and analysis of news and has produced three reports concerning New Zealand election coverage