

# What does news media mean to Gen Z?

An investigation into the media habits of Gen Z in the UK

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# Introduction



Having specialised in youth audiences within my work, as well as sharing youth insights to help others improve how they engage youth, I have long been an advocate for challenging the stereotypes we're told about young people and for avoiding the temptation to label generations as a homogenous group.

On the face of it, some of the data and shifts in behaviour we're seeing around news consumption might indicate a fall in interest in news as we know it. The relationship between news media brands and an audience that's grown up with a different media diet and pattern of consumption is, unsurprisingly, entirely different to that of even the generation before it.

My perception was that news media was not evolving fast enough for the channels where Gen Z (those born between 1997 and 2010) were most likely to begin their news journey, coupled with the challenge of platforms' algorithms creating echo chambers in an overall climate of distrust. Let's not forget that since the US election and Brexit in 2016, Gen Z have grown up at a time where alternative facts and trust has been widely eroded within news media<sup>1</sup>, particularly on social media platforms which had been proved to have influenced voting habits.

The other consistent theme was the challenge of how publicly funded news could exist alongside a set of news brands which are struggling to survive, combined with the threat of more polarised news content. Is the 24/7 relationship with unfiltered content and the lack of trust creating a cycle which means news media will struggle for Gen Z and Alpha attention and, in turn, attracting an audience to support their pay structures in the future?

I wanted to gain a holistic understanding bringing desk research, industry opinion and, of course, a youth perspective together to get the state of play, but also what opportunities might lie ahead.

I was surprised with what I found. I hope it offers you a good basis to inform your approach to engage youth audiences through news media and, as we see in most other areas, future proof what we may see across a wider range of audiences as they adapt to the changing news landscape.



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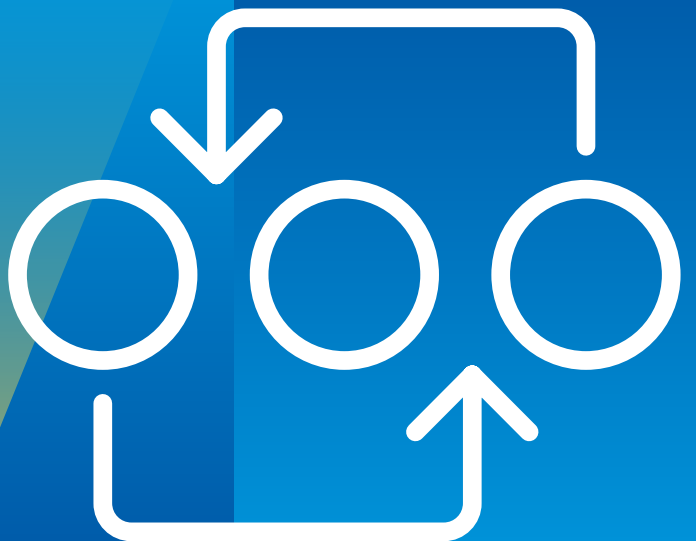
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# Methodology

This report uses existing research about Gen Z news media habits, looking specifically at UK audiences. It also references articles, polls and insights on trends in the UK and around the world. This approach helped to establish some key themes about news media habits, consumption patterns and preferences, perception of news media including trust, and more broadly, opportunities being tried and tested within the market.

The second stage involved gathering industry perspective on the findings, as well as opinions on the challenges and opportunities that face news media when it comes to engaging Gen Z audiences in the near future. This stage involved four interviews including a journalist, news outlet and youth agencies.

Finally, audience testing of some of the key findings of the report were put to a Gen Z audience, via Word on the Curb, a multicultural research and creative consultancy. Just over 1000 young people answered two questions. Their responses helped generate further insight into the evolving perspectives and needs from Gen Z when it comes to news.



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# Desk Research



## Does the generation you're in make a difference to news consumption?

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Gen Z have grown up with a far different media landscape to previous generations and their interactions with the internet and social media are shaping how they navigate news content and what they expect from their news media.

### Traditional media shifts

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Younger generations are found to have less of a relationship with traditional news outlets than older audiences<sup>2</sup>.

While they are more likely to consume news content online than older generations who favour print, radio and TV, this is largely driven by a 'social media first' journey, rather than through news websites directly<sup>3</sup>, with only a fifth of respondents in one survey saying they would start their news journey with a website or app<sup>4</sup>.

The UK has a lower consumption of online news subscriptions compared to other nations, with younger people saying they don't want to be tied down with a subscription<sup>5</sup>.

Whilst there is some evidence of local news brands increasing their online reach among 15-34 year olds<sup>6</sup> younger audiences are less likely to consume news for updates on what's going on nationally and locally than older generations<sup>7</sup>.

Despite an increase in news consumption on TV during the pandemic, this has continued to fall in recent years<sup>8</sup>. While lower than older generations, around half of 16-24s do consume news through broadcast and on-demand TV, while all main channels are showing signs of decline across all age groups<sup>9</sup>.

The drop in print media consumption has been exacerbated by the pandemic<sup>10</sup> and print is consumed far less by younger audiences than older generations<sup>11</sup>.

**53% of 16-24s consume news through live broadcast and on demand services<sup>12</sup>**

**16% of 16-24s access news through print and 12% online compared to 41% and 11% for 65-74 and 50% and 8% for 75+<sup>13</sup>**

**Among 18-24s who read print news, their preferred titles are the Guardian 36% and iPaper 29%<sup>14</sup>**

**30% of 18-24s would put the Guardian and Sky News among their online news sources<sup>15</sup>**

**9% of UK Households have an online news subscription<sup>16</sup>**

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## Social First Journeys

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Several reports find that Gen Z are more likely to start their news journey on social media while online as opposed to news websites or apps and this is largely reflected among 25-34s too<sup>17</sup>.

We can also see that among teens in the lower end of Gen Z, social media is quickly overtaking traditional channels for news content too. While the BBC still has the highest reach in the 12-15 age group, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube are their next biggest sources<sup>18</sup>.

As well as a shift in terms of where news is sourced, we're seeing a change to who the trusted voices are when it comes to news. Younger audiences pay more attention to celebrities, influencers and social media personalities in TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat, which contrasts with X (Twitter) and Facebook, where journalists and news outlets are still central to the conversation<sup>19</sup>.

TikTok has had a rapid growth for those referencing accessing news, although there are some debates over what constitutes news vs entertainment, celebrity and/or influencers referencing news events, rather than a journalist or news outlet sharing information about a news event. In fact, most who do say they access news on TikTok get more from 'others they follow' rather than news organisations<sup>20</sup>.

Different social media platforms are shifting in popularity among 18-24s for news; a faster drop of Facebook use and a sharper rise of Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok, with streaming and community platforms Twitch and Discord also being widely used among younger audiences<sup>21</sup>.

The rise of YouTube and TikTok for news content also highlights the appetite for video news on social media<sup>22</sup>.

Twitch has evolved from being considered an informal source of communication and entertainment, largely within a gaming context, to being increasingly used by traditional media and journalists to include interviews, debates, and science communication. We see a community interaction, not just messages between users and streamers, but among each other<sup>23</sup>.

**83% of 16-24s consume news online, 71% of which is driven by social medium<sup>24</sup>**

**81% of 25-24s consume news online, 66% driven by social media<sup>25</sup>**

**Social media is overtaking traditional channels for teens (12-15); Instagram 29%, TikTok 28% and YouTube 28% are their top sources for news. TikTok up from 22% in 2021<sup>26</sup>**

**BBC has the highest reach among 12-15s, 39% for news, it has fallen over the past year along with Facebook, which has had a steady decline among a teen audience for news since 2018<sup>27</sup>**

**On average 18-24s spend 10.6 hours a day online (44% of their day) compared to 8.5 hours of Millennials. Gaming, streaming and social media are dominating their time<sup>28</sup>**

**Gen Z are the only generation watching live streams more than live TV; 35% live TV, 46% YouTube livestream. 51% Instagram live, and 53% on TikTok<sup>29</sup>**

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## Has the perception of news changed among Gen Z?

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Among a generation that has grown up with digital media permeating their social life, education, work and entertainment, their access to news media and updates on news events has been 24/7 and increasingly unfiltered.

Does this influence how they perceive news media?

### Interest in news

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There is evidence that points to fewer people participating in online news with a rise in news avoidance across audiences<sup>30</sup>. However, some findings indicate the proportion of 16-24s that claim to consume no news at all is twice as high as older adults<sup>31</sup>.

Participation with news across audiences is less active and more passive, with less sharing on social media and through email, but a rise in sharing via messaging apps<sup>32</sup>.

Research indicates that people who use social media most often to access news are less likely to correctly identify important factual information, feel more antipathy for people who hold different political views and are less trusting of democratic institutions, than people who use TV and newspapers more often as a source of news<sup>33</sup>.

The drop in online news participation is matched with a growth in the use of messaging apps to share news and updates to friends, family and other smaller groups privately<sup>34</sup>.

Across Gen Z audiences, there is more interest in lighter topics such as sports, personalities, music and celebrity. Younger Gen Z audiences are more likely to feel news isn't relevant to their age, with 16-24 year olds more likely to follow news for work, studies or to pass the time and are more interested than other generations in lighter forms of news on social media, but not at the expense of harder topics<sup>35</sup>. Among all age groups who avoid news altogether, reasons include wanting more positive, explanatory and easier to understand content<sup>36</sup>.

Content within news publications is often used as a source of information for other aspects of youth audiences' lives. Gen Z and Millennials were found to be most likely to look for articles about brands in publications if they are considering purchasing them<sup>37</sup>.

**In the UK only around 1 in 10 now actively participate in online news, but their activities heavily influence media agenda. This group tends to be male, better educated, and more partisan in their political views<sup>38</sup>**

**1 in 10 (10%) of 16-24s claim to consume no news at all, twice as high as older adults (5%)<sup>39</sup>**

**Individual experts are a key element of news consumption for younger people<sup>40</sup>**

**Younger generations are more likely to read whatever comes up on their news app than older generations who are more likely to be loyal to publications<sup>41</sup>**

**Gen Z were more likely to share articles which had stats and numbers in them to back up a point<sup>42</sup>**

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## Trust & Algorithms

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Trust in the news has fallen. Public media brands still have the most level of trust and those who use them more frequently find them valuable personally and for society, but they have less reach among younger audiences<sup>43</sup>.

While social media is most likely to be used by those within Gen Z, it's also the least trusted by them and this is replicated among younger teens too<sup>44</sup>. They are more likely to see criticism of journalists and news outlets on social media too<sup>45</sup>, further challenging their relationship with news brands.

While trust on social media is lower than for TV, print and radio, it is rated moderately well by Gen Z for 'offering a range of opinions', 'helping to understand what's going on in the world today', as well as 'being important to me personally'<sup>46</sup>.

Audiences still worry that they'll miss out on important information and challenging viewpoints when it comes to algorithms serving news content<sup>47</sup>. However, younger audiences are broadly more comfortable with sharing personal information and previous news topics they've used in order to tailor have content tailored them compared with other adult populations<sup>48</sup>.

However, 16-24s are found to be more aware than the rest of the adult population that news online may be tailored to the individual based on algorithms<sup>49</sup>.

Some research investigating how news content was amplified and recommended on TikTok's For You Page found that news avoidance on TikTok is more by design than by engagement. You had to push hard against the algorithm if you wanted news content from publishers<sup>50</sup>.

However, as many studies have found, audiences across platforms want to consume the content of people and personalities that they trust over mainstream news accounts<sup>51</sup>.

**53% feel positive about previous news topics they've viewed being used to tailor results via algorithms compared to 25% of all adults<sup>52</sup>**

**48% worry they'll miss out on important information and 46% worry they're missing challenging viewpoints when it comes to algorithms serving our media diet on social media<sup>53</sup>**

**65% of younger audiences (and 55% of older ones) have tried to influence their story selection by following, unfollowing, blocking or muting<sup>54</sup>**

**56% of 16-24s are aware that news online may be tailored to the individual vs 35% of the rest of the adult population<sup>55</sup>**

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## Have changes influenced the format of news?

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The continued fall in print news consumption and growth in online-first has seen a rise in news media outlets evolving their social media presence, in part to establish a stronger relationship with a younger generation<sup>56</sup>.

But it's not just the traditional news brands offering news content that are contributing to a social first journey. Meme accounts, individual journalists, celebrities and influencers are all contributing to a social first news ecosystem.



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## News outlets vs individuals

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Many publishers are unsure about how to create news content on social media. Around half (49%) are creating content on TikTok, even with concerns over Chinese government influence and monetisation. Fears about misinformation and the potential to connect with younger audiences have spurred others to have a presence<sup>57</sup>.

Those who consume news on TikTok get more from 'others they follow' rather than news organisations<sup>58</sup>, with another study finding celebrities, influencers and social media personalities are paid more attention to on TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat, compared to X (Twitter) and Facebook where journalists and news outlets are still central to the conversation<sup>59</sup>.

There are numerous alternative social media apps, news sites and aggregators that have created news audiences in the UK. Research looking at some of these that exist in the US found that many with big accounts on the alternative social media sites are with individuals affiliated with an organisation (government entity or news organisation) and about 1 in 10 have been banned or demonetized by other social media sites<sup>60</sup>.

The same study found that the 18-29 year olds who are alternative social media news consumers were more likely to be less educated and right leaning, and felt a strong connection to the community they'd found there<sup>61</sup>.

**Those who get their news on TikTok get more from 'others they follow' rather than news organisations<sup>62</sup>**

**Audiences say they pay more attention to celebrities, influencers and social media personalities in TikTok, Instagram and Snapchat, which contrasts with Twitter and Facebook where journalists and news outlets are still central to the conversation<sup>63</sup>**

**Because younger age groups have accessed news on social media, they have less experience of public news providers, highlighting the importance of better engaging young people for their future success<sup>64</sup>**

## News topics and format

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The format of news content on TikTok and Instagram sees numerous established news outlets share content in-line with the platforms. Younger presenters break stories down, increasing more entertaining and fun pieces alongside explainers of more serious stories. At the time of writing, BBC News and ITV News have over 2m followers and tens of millions of likes on TikTok. On Instagram, BBC News has almost 30m followers with BBC News UK at 250,000 followers and ITV News around 400,000 followers.

TikTok and Instagram are providing more visual content, optimised for younger audiences, but require more investment from publishers, often for less return in terms of traffic and revenue. With shifts on the way fuelled by automation and AI, publishers need to figure out how to use these to drive new users and deeper connections, while contributing to their core business<sup>65</sup>.

We also see existing and emerging youth news brands align social first journeys to their other content such as websites, longer-form reads and podcasts. Tortoise Media, Vice, Mashable, The News Movement and Politics Joe are examples of these.

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In addition, we can see a growth in meme accounts that offer entertainment and news content that have evolved to become major players on social platforms.

We can also see a shift in the use of messaging apps for news. Meta's announcement of 'Channels' on WhatsApp could see this individual channel strategy come into the mainstream, enabling people to get updates from celebrities, journalists and outlets directly within the app<sup>66</sup>.

**80% of TikTok users prefer raw over polished content<sup>67</sup>**

**The rise of YouTube and TikTok highlights the appetite for video news on social media<sup>68</sup>**

**Multimedia consumption is interesting among young audiences. They're less likely to read news than older groups and most likely to watch and most likely to listen compared to older generations<sup>69</sup>**

**18-24s are watching news videos more than other age groups on YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter and Twitch, with only 25-35s watching them more on Facebook<sup>70</sup>**

**Different news topics have different success levels on different social media platforms<sup>71</sup>**

## Podcasts

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While overall podcast consumption for news content is still relatively small, this does allow more personalised and in-depth content around news, and they score highly for accuracy, trust and impartiality<sup>72</sup>.

Watching podcast content is popular and around a quarter find podcasts via social media first. Younger audiences are more likely than older audiences to watch or listen to news<sup>73</sup>.

Podcasts continue to be an area for growth with most young people listening to podcasts before they are 18<sup>74</sup> and around a third of Gen Z accessing podcasts each month<sup>75</sup>.

Gen Z listen to podcasts to stay up to date on the latest topics and stay informed of social issues<sup>76</sup>, with other studies finding around 10% regularly access podcasts specifically for news content, with a rise in interest in video podcasts too<sup>77</sup>.

**66% of Gen Z listen to podcasts to stay up to date on the latest topics and 61% to stay informed about social issues<sup>78</sup>**

**34% of Gen Z access podcasts each month<sup>79</sup>**

**10% of Gen Z reach news through podcasts, 2% of which through BBC Sounds<sup>80</sup>**

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# Industry View



To further understand some of the findings from the desk research those working directly with youth audiences and within news media were interviewed.

People who added their perspective through interviews and direct comment include:

- Jay Richards, Imagen Insights
- Sophia Smith Galer, Author and journalist
- Amy Davies, Global Vice President, Vice Insights
- Josh Akapo, Archtype

*“Our news team changed their approach to news several years ago. What they found, in parallel with our research, was that we needed to galvanize the issues that young people care about, especially Gen Z.*

*“90% of our Gen Z audience say that the primary reason they consume news is social issues coverage... so the idea of news needed to be expanded. Anything that’s new in their lives and any of the issues that mattered to them.”*

– **Amy Davies, Vice Insights.**

Several reports point to the drop in relationship Gen Z have with public news providers and more broadly news brands. So, to what extent is this shaping how news media is evolving to social first?

*“News outlets aren’t yet making distinctive enough content celebrating their original journalism in my view. We know news and news accounts get views on TikTok, but wildly varying engagement and a reliance on newswire b-roll means a lot of it looks the same, isn’t building a relationship with a viewer long-term and the brands don’t raise awareness or build community as a result.*

*“Every week they don’t change their strategy, news creators fill in for them, eventually replacing traditional news media as reliable content sources for many news audiences - not just Gen Z.”*

– **Sophia Smith Galer.**

*“From our community, one thing we’re seeing is that they (Gen Z) will hear it first on social and they’ll head to the website to clarify.*

*“Because Gen Z are being bombarded on social by so many brands, it’s taking longer to build brand affinity, so they’re getting to their mid-20s/early 30s before building it. If that’s happening with brands, it’s happening with news media brands too.”*

– **Jay Richards, Imagen Insights.**

*“All of our formats are social first journalism now. We’re on every single platform youth are consuming. They’re getting the majority of their news social first and we’ve started innovating too - at Vice News we launched a Twitch stream. Overlapping with those native spaces makes sense.” Amy Davies, Vice Insights.*

*“Our media diet is quite different now. There are so many different runners in the mix for where we get it from. There is this idea of a more democratised media that Gen Z experiences, but the algorithms are systematically problematic. However, the real fear comes from the platforms that aren’t giving you content like that, so WhatsApp and encrypted message-based platforms for example. The risk of misinformation is far greater there.”*

– **Josh Akapo, Archtype.**

Some of the stereotypes might lean on findings around Gen Z wanting more entertaining, light-touch news and correlate this to a drop in interest in news more broadly. While we have to remember the importance of different cohorts within a generation wanting different types of content, we can also see how journalists and news outlets address the challenge of balancing lighter news and harder topics.

*“I think most people are alert but there are many who are anxious about the world. Gen Z yearning for entertainment but not at the expense of being informed is just them wanting to hold several things at once.*

*“This understanding - coming from meme culture, there are some serious moments in time, where there isn’t much else to do but have some light relief alongside some of the discussion and debate.”*

– **Josh Akapo, Archtype.**

*“Younger audiences consider more things as being newsworthy - this should be a positive for news media, who can now create a greater diversity of content to respond to them. News creators specialise in ‘edutainment’ and news outlets that emulate this tend to do well.”*

– **Sophia Smith Galer.**

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*"It's all through the day. They consume news morning, and night across multiple platforms. The stories being covered need to reflect the Gen Z world and identity and that's dramatically different to that of their predecessors."*

*"We did a huge study about what are the characteristics of content that draw young people in. It was knowledge, they want to get info they can't find elsewhere; growth, they want to be inspired to grow; respite, entertainment and humour. How do we marry information with some light-hearted relief now and again - and I don't think that diminishes news in any way."*

– **Amy Davies, Vice Insights.**

*"We've always seen journalists as serious people. But there's a new generation of journalists who can do serious news as well as entertaining content. What you'll see on socials is content creators being opinionated on many things. Gen Z will follow influencers for one thing but value their opinion on other issues, including the news."*

– **Jay Richards, Imagen Insights.**

There are some seemingly contradictory findings when it comes to trust, however. While Gen Z are more aware of the risks in terms of validity, source and misinformation on social media, according to a number of surveys it is their least trusted source. They are increasingly more likely to enjoy a social first news journey. What are the risks of the fall in trust of news media?

*"I think there's a perfect opportunity for a publication to come along and just be the source. When we're creating the news, we're saying "this is the truth", where social is so immediate we need "with the information we have now, this is what we're hearing" and later update it."*

– **Jay Richards, Imagen Insights.**

*"There's a huge issue of trust with established news institutions. We conducted a study which found Gen Z are moving away from content from an influencer without a news background which has influenced our casting - we cast talent with a strong journalist background."*

*"There's started to be a shift in how we present our news. We started to put our editors on screen, again because of their credentials. We're humanising stories as well, which is something we've always tried to do. Our research has shown a shift away from inauthentic and glossy depictions. Not just news, but people expect a raw, genuine kind of content that is entirely humanised. So, there's been a shift away from a polished newscasting that we might have seen a few years ago."*

– **Amy Davies, Vice Insights.**

*"The individual source and celebrity of journalists creates mini celebrities who have a platform as journalists. The issue with that and trust is that it requires a hero approach to individuals. When those individuals mess up, we see cancel culture. Although cancel culture is less central than it was."*

– **Josh Akapo, Archtype.**

We know youth audiences don't all consume content in the same way; how are these stereotypes being challenged and what other trends in news consumption are being seen? Does this give us clues into the opportunities available to better engage youth audiences in future?

*"Youth audiences aren't monolithic. We need to be on all the platforms they are consuming; social media and longer form, AR and in-gaming environments. It's going to the spaces and places they inhabit."*

*"Whenever a format is created they (Vice news team) think through it in an ecosystem way. We're not just dumping the same format everywhere, it's making it right for each platform."*

*"Involve young people in the ideation process, then the community aspect. Gen Z are going back to archival content and consuming it more than other generations. A lot of pieces have journalists exploring the thematic at the same time as the audience. There's something in that idea of exploration, unveiling a story in real time that's hooking Gen Z. I would hypothesize it's down to their growth of learning."*

*"They want to feel they're discovering it and feel that the journalist is on a par with them and not authoritarian."*

– **Amy Davies, Vice Insights.**

*"Gen Z are one of the most politically aware generations yet. The future of all news content will be as human beings you have to be smart and have multiple sources of content and make your own decisions. That then opens up the discourse with friends and people around you."*

– **Jay Richards, Imagen Insights.**

*"It's not that Gen Z doesn't care, it's that Gen Z feels powerless. Fundamentally, we need to change how we think about people. Start viewing them as independent thinkers, part of communities based on things happening in the world."*

– **Josh Akapo, Archtype.**

What other innovations might we see when it comes to news formats for Gen Z? And if they're social first how else might we see their news journeys evolve?

*"If you could group together publications that were right and left leaning that would give you a balanced view if consumed together, I think Gen Z would be more likely to sign up to that."*

– **Jay Richards, Imagen Insights.**

*"There's been a shift back to analogue among Gen Z too. It's a revolt against the chaos that the world is in, there is a desire for simplicity. We're bringing back our zine but in a digital format for example. If I had to predict what's coming in the future, I'd say there would be a gravitation back to longer form content and that goes for news content."*

*"Bringing Gen Z into more of your news processes. We had Story Studio which is an internal proprietary tool which is inbuilt with a creator community around that and works with that community to be the journalist in the field, so you're putting more ownership into this community"*

– **Amy Davies, Vice Insights.**

## Comments from elsewhere:

*"Media organisations have been too slow to keep up with shifting audience patterns and expectations. Bad actors have filled the void with misinformation. Journalism must learn from what is successful in social areas, but never, ever lose the DNA of your business which gives you trust."*

*"We can't keep shouting at young people to consume material that does not interest them very much. Understand your lane. The 'one size fits all model' really struggles in social media spaces."*

– **Kamal Ahmed, co-founder and editor-in-chief of social-first newcomer The News Movement (TNM) at the Digital News Report 2023 launch event with Reuters.**



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# Youth Findings



Just over 1000 16-34s (Gen Z, those born between 1997-2010 and Millennials, those born between 1981-1996) were surveyed through Word On the Curb at the end of December 2023, to test two key concepts that were derived from both the desk research and industry interviews.

The first focused on a question on how youth audiences define what news is. Is the definition of what Gen Z feels about what news is to them critical to how it's served and developed?

Gen Z are more likely to agree that *'news is anything that is new to me'* than Millennials, **34% vs 29%**

A greater proportion of Millennials agree that *'news is updates from official news outlets'* than Gen Z, **38% vs 35%**

A similar proportion within each group agree that *'news is something I have to interpret and fact check for myself'*; Gen Z **27%**, Millennials **28%**.

This difference is greater at opposite ends of the cohort, with 16-18 year olds most likely to agree with the statement that *'news is anything that is new to me'* **38%**, followed by *'news is updates from official news outlets'*, **33%**. 28-30 and 31-34 year olds are most likely to agree with the statement that *'news is updates from official news outlets'* (**39% and 40%**).

When looking at responses based on ethnicity, White respondents are most likely to agree that *'news is updates from official news outlets'* (39%) whereas Asian and Black respondents are most likely to agree with *'news is anything that is new to me'*, 39% and 40%. Respondents of mixed or multiple ethnicity are more likely to agree that *'news is something I have to interpret and fact check for myself'*, 42%, with those that identified as *'other'* in terms of ethnicity also most likely to agree with this statement, 53%.

The second question focused on what respondents want from the news content they consume. Options include;

- Ways to filter news so I see more about the issues I care about
- More entertaining and light news
- News on social media I can read/watch more about whenever I want
- Content from creators I respect on current issues
- Journalists who are more representative of my background
- Ways to block out news altogether
- Other

**30% of Gen Z** said they want the filters on their news to help them see more information about the issues they care about. 27% of Millennials agreed.

The next most popular statement was *'more entertaining and light news'*, but Gen Z were more likely to agree with this than Millennials, 24% vs 19%.

For non-White and non-heterosexual respondents the statement *'journalists who are more representative of my background'* was more than twice as important to them, supporting industry references to the importance of casting the right journalist talent.

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# Conclusions



## Definition of 'News'

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The definition of what news now means to a Gen Z audience is the critical starting point in determining how news offerings can evolve to serve the interests and needs of the next generation.

It's not that a younger audience just wants lighter content; they need a wider breadth of content to reflect the spheres they navigate on different platforms.

Currently they find this through a serendipitous discovery on social media, with signs of a deeper exploration based on interests. Long form, in-depth, multimedia content forms have a place, they just have a user journey that has evolved around individuals and looks different to previous generations.

To build brand affiliations and strengthen trust, news outlets must continue to evolve how they serve their social first news journeys and deepen that engagement.

## Consumption

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It's clear that the measures of news consumption by channel don't, in isolation, give you the true picture of what a generation growing up amid a complex digital landscape and evolving culture are looking for in news media.

Gen Z's relationship with news brands is better contextualised in relation to the ecosystem of channels and content they've grown up consuming. Content tailored to their own interests and experiences, moving away from faceless brands to influencers, micro-influencers and communities - all of which they are accustomed to engaging with in a two-way relationship, and across their social spheres.

Their feeds are more in tune to personal stories and experiences, curated by them to exist as extensions of their social and professional spheres. The positioning of news as a one-way source has therefore not transitioned easily into the social first journey.

The way stories are being communicated, the journalists and presenters who are recruited, and the innovation to explore different formats, channels and/or communities still feels in transition for most outlets.

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## Challenges

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News content has been accessible and available throughout these spheres, 24/7, in ways that are unfiltered, often inaccurate, as well as being broadcast to them in multiple formats.

On social media, ensuring there is a level of media plurality, where there is a diversity of viewpoints available and ensuring that one media owner doesn't have too much influence over public opinion and the political agenda, is one of the biggest challenges. There is work underway looking at the UK's media plurality framework (Government and Ofcom), which has to evolve to suit the media landscape, social first journeys and intermediaries involved.

This challenges the fundamental positioning of news as a trusted source. The ecosystem of news Gen Z and Gen Alpha inherit is far different to the generations before them. The risk of echo chambers and media manipulation amid a polarized political landscape continue to threaten their relationships with news brands.

As well as the challenges publicly funded news brands have when it comes to relationships with younger audiences, the funding model behind many other outlets is another not insignificant challenge. Not only do news outlets have to evolve their social first journeys, they have to work out ways to monetize and fund them.

The UK already has a relatively low proportion of households paying for news subscriptions, something that the Gen Z audience are also likely to emulate. How news brands leverage different opportunities, content packages and branded content or insight over the traditional advertising models will be key.

## Opportunity

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Where news outlets are consulting their audiences, exploring new technology and/or building unique communities around news content, there are clearly opportunities that are evolving for Gen Z audiences.

With a broadening definition of what news content can offer, there too then are more opportunities to build connections with a younger demographic.

While on the face of it, some data could point to a lack of interest in news, Gen Z have a range of interests, concerns and ways in which they want to learn and grow with content alongside the everyday consumption which has rapidly increased as they have grown up.

It's not necessarily a case of more, it's about more of the right content in the right form alongside what and how else they are consuming content.

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