

# News and Young Australians in 2020

How Young People Access,  
Perceive and are Affected  
by News Media

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Institute for Culture  
and Society



Digital Media  
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Many of the questions included in this survey were adapted (with permission) from a survey designed by Common Sense Media for use in the United States. This was published as *News and America's kids: How young people perceive and are impacted by the news* (Robb 2017).

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# Why we undertook this research

In 2017 when we implemented the first Australian national survey to examine the news practices and experiences of young Australians, we wanted to address a lack of research into young people's news media practices at a time when news media organisations and news media engagement were being challenged and transformed.

Since we published the results of that survey, we have continued to study young Australians and news media. Through our research, we have learnt that young people are not well represented in the Australian news media and neither are the issues they care most about<sup>1</sup>. We've learnt that Australian teachers believe it is critically important to teach students about news media, but many feel they are constrained by barriers that prevent them from doing this<sup>2</sup>. We have also found that young people from around the country are passionate about news media and many are already taking action to ensure it serves our society well<sup>3</sup>.

Our survey findings in 2020 indicate that young people's expectations and experiences of news have changed in many ways. No doubt, these changes are in some ways related to the two recent national crises Australia has endured. The first, the Black Summer Australian bushfires, ravaged the east coast of the country throughout the 2019-2020 summer, resulting in 34 lost lives, the death of more than a billion animals, and the widespread destruction of homes and bushland. The COVID-19 global pandemic took hold soon after and is still unfolding as we publish this report. Already its impact on the economy and on society has been profound.

Both of these crises were accompanied by significant examples of misinformation and disinformation, particularly on social media platforms<sup>4</sup>. These crises demonstrated the repercussions of misinformation and disinformation when presented as news, and highlighted how vital high quality and accurate news media are to our individual and collective health, wellbeing and safety.

The COVID-19 crisis has also provided insights into how news media can better serve and include young Australians. For example, news-focused podcasts and television programs were made just for young people to explain COVID-19 in a language and style more appropriate and appealing to them<sup>5</sup>. Young Australians have also featured in the news more regularly, as a result of school closures, while family homes featured more frequently in news reports as social distancing and 'stay at home' messaging become a temporary norm in Australian society.

At the same time, COVID-19 has shown how vulnerable news organisations are given how reliant they are on advertising revenue. This may be especially true for smaller local and more niche publications, including those that aim to appeal to younger audiences as indicated by the closure of the Australian office of the online news publication *Buzzfeed*<sup>6</sup> alongside the closure of numerous regional news rooms<sup>7</sup>.

As we reflect on all of these changes to news media in the months and years to come, it is worth noting that young people are often forgotten in public discussions about the future of news. Worse still, they are often subjected to unfounded generalisations about their assumed news attitudes and practices. We hope that this report, based on findings from our nationally representative survey of young Australians aged 8-16, provides new insights that can be part of an evidence-based discussion. This, we hope, will be useful to those who care about the future of news media and therefore want to understand what news means to young Australians and how it could be made more relevant to their lives.

# Key findings

Between February 28 and March 16 2020 we surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,069 young Australians aged 8-16 years to understand their news engagement practices and experiences. In this report we refer to two age categories we have used for our analysis: children (aged 8-12) and teens (aged 13-16).

This survey repeats and extends a survey we carried out in 2017. The preliminary analysis provided in this report considers the overall results and, where relevant, it also examines how results varied by the gender and age category of respondents. The results have also been compared with the 2017 survey findings and significant changes are discussed wherever we deemed these relevant and notable<sup>8</sup>. All survey questions were mandatory and the analysis is based on the full sample responses of 1069 participants, unless otherwise indicated.

It is worth noting that this survey followed the devastating Australian bushfires, known as "Black Summer." In addition, as the data was being collected the novel coronavirus outbreak became the dominant news topic. A few days before the data collection commenced, a travel ban was put in place for anyone who had been to China in the past 14 days. By the time data collection was completed, the World Health Organisation (WHO) had declared a global pandemic and the national death toll had hit five (1000 globally). However, no social distancing rules or shutdowns had yet been implemented in Australia. We expect that both of these events will have had some bearing on the respondents and on their perception and experience of news.

**Our key findings are as follows.**

## News consumption has become more frequent and more social for young Australians.

To provide a snapshot of news consumption, we asked young Australians where they got news stories from on the previous day. We found that 88% had consumed news from at least one source. Family were by far the most common source of news with 54% of young people reporting that they heard news stories from their family on the previous day. This was followed by television (36%), a school teacher (33%), friends (30%), social media networks (29%), radio (19%), and a website or mobile app (19%). Fewer than 1 in 25 young Australians said they read news stories in a newspaper (4%).

When we compare the results of our survey with those from 2017 we find that news media is being consumed more frequently and in more social ways. More young Australians now receive news more often from family, teachers and friends but also online, especially through social media.

Outside of getting news from family or teachers, though, most young Australians see themselves as news consumers 'sometimes', with only one in five using a news media source 'often'.

## Social media is being used more regularly to get news.

Teens use social media sites to get news stories and headlines much more than children. However, both groups are using social media platforms more often to get news when compared with 2017.

Two thirds of teens use social media to get news often or sometimes (75%). For teens, Instagram is the most popular social media site for getting news with 49% getting news this way. This is followed by Facebook (44%) and YouTube (40%).

A little over one third of children use social media to get news often or sometimes (38%). For children YouTube is top, with 31% using it to get news, followed by Facebook (17%) and Instagram (15%).

There are notable gender differences in the use of social media to access news stories. Girls are more likely to use Instagram, TikTok and Snapchat. Boys are more likely to use YouTube and WhatsApp.

## Close to half of young people pay very little attention – or no attention – to the source of news stories they find online.

A little more than half of young Australians say they pay some attention or a lot of attention (53%) to the source of news stories but close to half pay no attention or very little (46%). There is very little difference between teens and children, despite the fact that teenagers get far more news on social media.

Just one third (36%) of young Australians agree that they know how to tell fake news from real news.

**Young Australians trust their family more than any news sources. They do not have high levels of trust for news media organisations.**

While 57% of young people trust their family a lot as a news source, only 19% trust news organisations a lot. Family are also the most preferred news source for most children (58%) and they are the second most preferred news source for teenagers (41%), following social media (44%).

**Most young Australians consume adult news. Most also believe that young people need news made especially for them.**

Most children and teenagers access the same news as their parents or guardians (20% often do this and 51% sometimes do).

At the same time, more than half of young Australians (53%) believe that young people need news media made especially for them (57% of children and 48% of teens).

**News has become more distressing and frightening. Many young people do not feel they can talk to parents or teachers when distressed, or they are unsure if they can.**

More young Australians say that news makes them often or sometimes feel afraid (62%), angry (60%), sad or upset (75%) when compared with 2017. Girls were more likely to report feeling negative emotions as a response to news media when compared with boys. However, more girls also stated that they often or sometimes feel motivated to act to respond a situation presented in the news (61% versus 49%).

While 84% of young people feel they can talk to their family about news stories that upset or distress them, 15% feel they cannot do this, or they are unsure if they can. At school, when upset or distressed by news stories, 61% of young people feel they can talk with their teachers, while 39% feel they cannot do this, or they are unsure if they can.

**Young people do not believe news media organisations serve them well. They also have ideas about how it could serve them better.**

Two thirds of young Australians (66%) believe that news media organisations have no idea what the lives of young people their age are like. Fewer than half (45%) think that news media covers issues that matter to them.

Young people have clear ideas about how Australian news media can better serve young people. The most cited solutions are to cover more youth issues, to feature more positive news stories and to support more youth representation by including young people more as news sources, reporters and presenters.

**Young Australians receive infrequent lessons about how to critique news media. News made for young people may also provide important opportunities for developing news media literacy.**

While close to half (49%) of young Australians feel that getting news is important to them, one third (33%) say it is not. This provides a challenge for educators, since while most young people value direct engagement with news media, many clearly want to delegate the responsibility for keeping them informed to their parents.

However, it is clear that overall interest and engagement in the news increases with age. Online news consumption is also increasing for both children and teenagers.

Despite this, our survey finds that only one in five young people (20%) said they had received lessons at school in the past year to help them work out if news stories are true and can be trusted – and this is the same for children and teenagers. Just three in ten young people (28%) had received lessons during this period to help them create their own news stories. While we expected media literacy education to have increased during the period 2017 to 2020, given the increased public focus on misinformation and disinformation, these findings suggest this is not the case.

# News and Young Australians in 2020

How Young People Access, Perceive and are Affected by News Media

## YOUNG AUSTRALIANS VALUE THE NEWS



**49%**

agree that following the news is important to them



**74%**

say news makes them feel smart or knowledgeable

## RECENT ACTIVITY

When asked where they got news stories from **yesterday**



**88%**

had consumed news from at least one source

and they got news stories from



their family

**54%**



radio

**19%**



television

**36%**



a website or mobile app

**19%**



a teacher

**33%**



a newspaper

**4%**



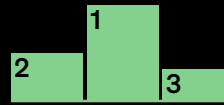
friends

**30%**



social media

**29%**



## PREFERRED SOURCES

Top 3 preferred news sources for young Australians

Children (8-12 yr olds)



**58%**  
said their family



**42%**  
said television



**34%**  
said a teacher or other adult in their lives

Teens (13-16 yr olds)



**44%**  
said social media networks



**41%**  
said family



**34%**  
said television

## TRUST

Young Australians **trust** news from their family more than any other source.



Family

**57%**

**36%**

Teachers

**40%**

**47%**

News organisations

**19%**

**52%**

Friends

**13%**

**54%**

Trust a lot    Some trust

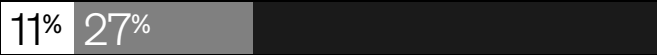




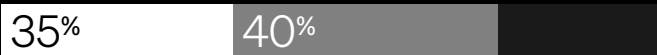
## SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a source of news but **not as much** as we might think.

Children



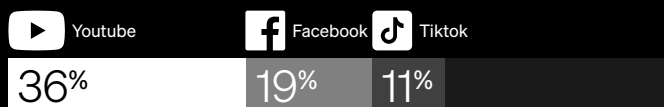
Teens



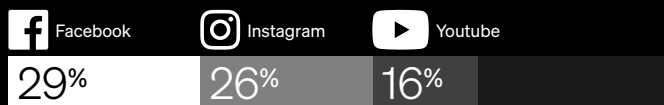
Often Sometimes

When **using** social media:

Children prefer



Teens prefer



Around half of the young people who get news on social media **pay attention** to the source of the news they find online.



## DISTRESS

News can be distressing for young Australians who say it often or sometimes makes them **feel**.



75%  
upset or sad



62%  
afraid



60%  
angry



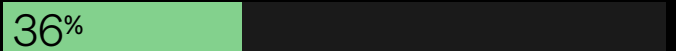
## BIAS & NEGLECT

Young Australians **believe** news media organisations neglect them and are biased.

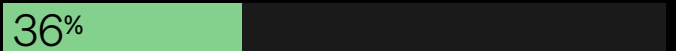
News organisations have **no idea** what their lives are like



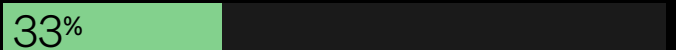
Young people do not often appear on the news talking about the **issues that affect them**



News does not treat people from different **cultural backgrounds** equally



News does not treat **men and women** equally



## ADULT NEWS

Young Australians regularly **consume adult news**.



Children



Teens



Often Sometimes

But most believe young people need **news made especially for them**.

Children



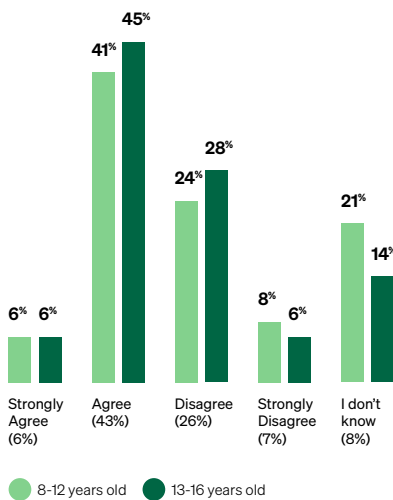
Teens



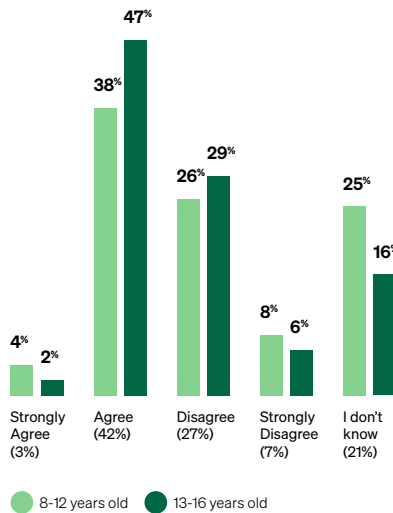
# Findings in detail

## How important and relevant is news to young Australians?

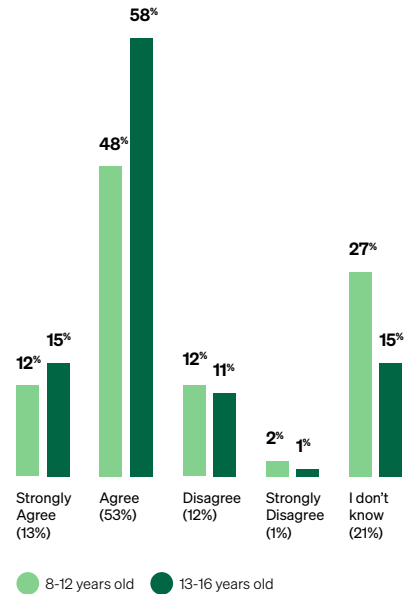
**Figure 1.**  
“Getting news stories is important to me.”



**Figure 2.**  
“The news covers issues that matter to me”.



**Figure 3.**  
“Most news media have no idea what the lives of people my age are really like.”



Close to half (49%) of young Australians aged 8-16 years agree or strongly agree that getting news is important to them (Figure 1). More teens felt news was important to them (51%) than did children (47%). One third (33%) of young Australians believe news is not important to them (35% of teens and 32% of children).

Since our 2017 survey, **getting news has become more important to young Australians** (up 5% from 44% in 2017). Correspondingly, fewer young people believe news is not important to them (down 5% from 38% in 2017). These changes may be related to the major news events that have taken place in 2020: first, the Australian bushfires and second, the COVID-19 pandemic, which was just beginning to become a dominant news topic in Australia when this survey data was collected.

The survey results suggest that the topics that dominate news media may reduce young people's perception of its relevance to them (Figure 2). Close to half of Australia's young people (45%) believe news media covers issues that matter to them, but more than one third (34%) believe it does not. More teens (49%) felt news covered issues that matter to them when compared with children (42%).

When compared with 2017, **young people in 2020 were more likely to agree that news covers issues that matter to them** (up 7%).

A perceived disconnect between news media coverage and young people's lives is reflected in the finding that **two thirds of young people (66%) believe that news media organisations have no idea what young people's lives are like** (73% for teens and 60% for children, see Figure 3). While the figure for children increased by 1%, 5% more teens believe news media organisations have no idea what young people's lives are like when compared with 2017.

# Previous day's news activity

Figure 4.

"Yesterday I got news stories from..."

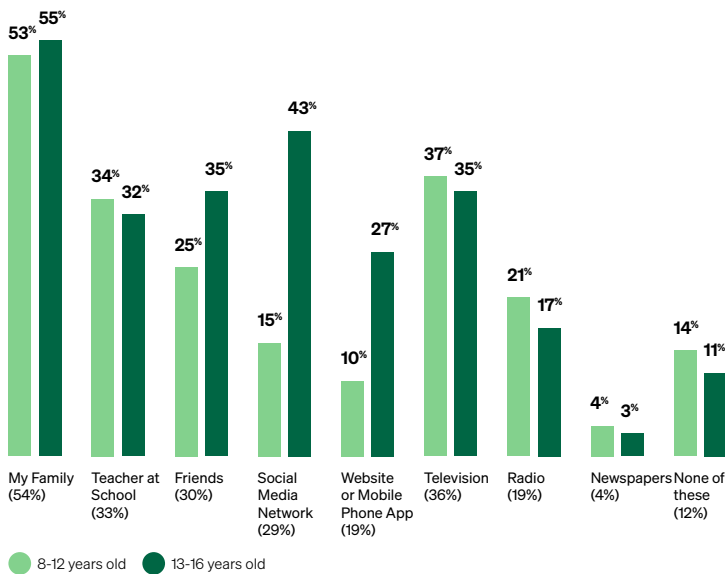
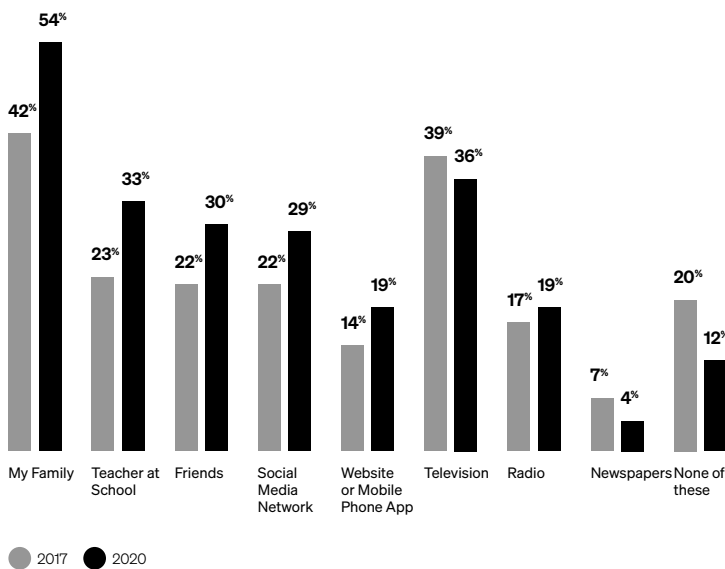


Figure 5.

"Yesterday I got news stories from..." (2017 and 2020)



When asked about the previous day's news engagement (Figure 4), young Australians said they accessed news from a range of sources, including from family members (54%, up 12% from 2017), television (36%, down 3%), teachers at school (33%, up 10%), friends (30%, up 8%), social media (29%, up 7%), radio (19%, up 2%) and from websites or mobile apps (19%, up 5%). Fewer young people accessed news the previous day from newspapers (4%, down 3%). There has been a substantial decrease in the number of young people who did not access news from any of these sources on the previous day (12%, down 8%).

The striking finding here is that **overall news has become more social**: received more often directly from family, teachers and friends (70% using at least one of these sources), but also online, especially through social media (29%).

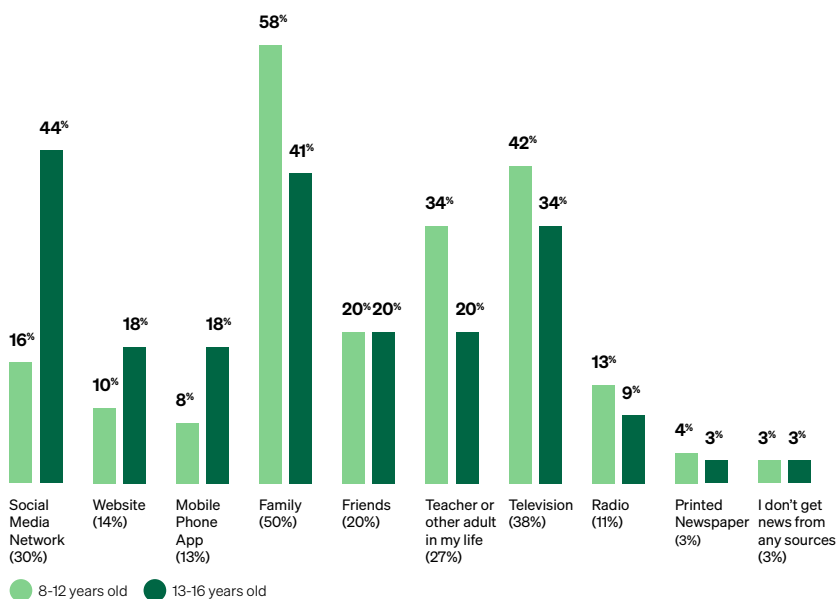
In 2017, 25% of children aged 8-12 had not accessed any news the day before the survey, while in 2020 this dropped to 14%, suggesting **far greater news engagement from children** – a finding illustrated in multiple ways throughout this report.

**Teens are much more likely than children to use digital sources to get news**, including social media (43% compared to 15%) and websites or mobile apps (27% compared to 10%).

As already noted, it is possible the overall increase in news consumption among young people is related to two major events that preceded the survey: the 'Black Summer' Australian bushfires and COVID-19.

# Overall preferred news sources

Figure 6.  
Preferred sources for getting news



When asked about their preferred news source (they could choose up to 3; Figure 6) young Australians chose family (50%, an increase of 4% when compared with 2017), followed by television (38%, down 9%) and social media networks (30%, up 4%). In 2017 television was ranked top, followed by family and social media.

As with 2017, the least preferred methods were newspapers (3%, down 2% from 2017), radio (11%, up 1%) and mobile phone apps (13%, up 4% in 2017).

There are considerable differences in preferred news sources for children and teens. **Family are the most preferred news source for children, while social media is top for teens.** This is a change from 2017, where family was the most preferred news source for children and television was the most preferred for teens.

## Frequency of news access

Table 1 (see following page) tells us *how often* young people access various news sources and the results are shown for both 2017 and 2020.

In 2020 **social relations – family, teachers, friends – are more frequent sources of news when compared with news media.** Young Australians indicate that teachers and other adults are a regular source of news stories (59% sometimes, 31% often); as are their families (53% sometimes, 38% often); and friends (55% sometimes, 21% often).

After family, teachers and friends, television is the next most frequent source with 16% often getting news this way and 47% sometimes doing this. Television is followed by social media, which young people sometimes (33%) or often (23%) use. Unlike with television, however, the number of young people who use social media regularly to get news increased (up 8% from 2017).

In 2017 the results were slightly different: television and social media were the most frequently used news media sources, while radio was the third most frequent source. This is no longer the case, with websites/mobile phone apps now being used more frequently than radio by young people (17% often using these and 34% sometimes using them).

Newspapers in print are accessed less often by young people when compared with 2017: 57% say they never access newspapers (up 6% from 2017).

The greatest contrast between children and teens is the frequency with which they access news stories via digital media sources. While there were **increases in digital media sources for both groups**, more than two thirds of teens access news on social media (75% often or sometimes), whereas children use social media much less frequently (38% often or sometimes). Likewise, teens use websites and mobile phone apps more often (64% often or sometimes) in contrast to children (38% often or sometimes).

When comparing the news sources used in 2017 and 2020, while the number of young people who regularly access news from television and radio remained quite steady, newspaper consumption dropped and news consumption via websites, mobile phones and social media increased. At the same time, **news was more frequently accessed via teachers, family and friends.**

**Table 1.**

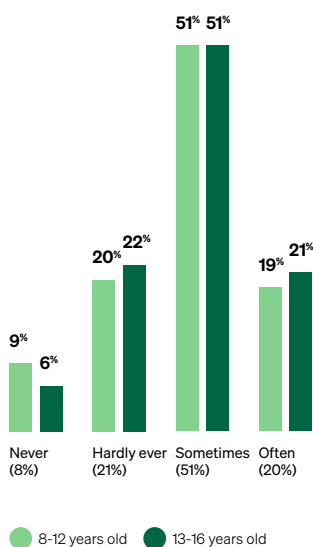
Frequency of getting news from different sources (2017 and 2020)

<b>Overall</b>								
	<b>Often</b>		<b>Sometimes</b>		<b>Hardly ever</b>		<b>Never</b>	
	2017	2020	2017	2020	2017	2020	2017	2020
Read newspapers in print	4%	2%	16%	13%	29%	28%	51%	57%
Listen to news stories on the radio	10%	8%	32%	36%	31%	34%	27%	22%
Watch news stories on television	19%	16%	44%	47%	26%	26%	11%	11%
Get news stories from a social media network	16%	23%	32%	33%	23%	17%	29%	27%
Get news stories from a website or mobile phone app	12%	17%	27%	34%	25%	22%	36%	27%
Hear about news stories from friends	17%	21%	54%	55%	20%	18%	9%	6%
Hear about news stories from family	32%	38%	54%	53%	10%	8%	4%	2%
Hear about news stories from teachers or other adults in your life	27%	31%	57%	59%	11%	8%	5%	2%
<b>8-12 years old</b>								
Read newspapers in print	4%	1%	15%	14%	27%	26%	54%	59%
Listen to news stories on the radio	10%	8%	35%	38%	27%	31%	28%	22%
Watch news stories on television	18%	14%	43%	49%	26%	25%	13%	11%
Get news stories from a social media network	9%	11%	24%	27%	23%	21%	44%	42%
Get news stories from a website or mobile phone app	8%	9%	19%	29%	24%	25%	49%	37%
Hear about news stories from friends	16%	18%	50%	53%	22%	20%	12%	9%
Hear about news stories from family	29%	35%	53%	54%	12%	9%	6%	3%
Hear about news stories from teachers or other adults in your life	27%	30%	55%	59%	12%	9%	6%	2%
<b>13-16 years old</b>								
Read newspapers in print	4%	3%	17%	11%	31%	31%	47%	56%
Listen to news stories on the radio	9%	9%	29%	33%	36%	38%	26%	21%
Watch news stories on television	21%	17%	45%	44%	25%	28%	9%	11%
Get news stories from a social media network	24%	35%	42%	40%	22%	13%	12%	12%
Get news stories from a website or mobile phone app	17%	25%	35%	39%	26%	19%	22%	17%
Hear about news stories from friends	19%	24%	59%	57%	18%	16%	4%	3%
Hear about news stories from family	36%	42%	55%	52%	7%	6%	2%	0%
Hear about news stories from teachers or other adults in your life	28%	31%	59%	59%	10%	8%	3%	2%

## Consuming adult news

Figure 7.

“How often do you consume the same news as your parent/s or guardian/s?”

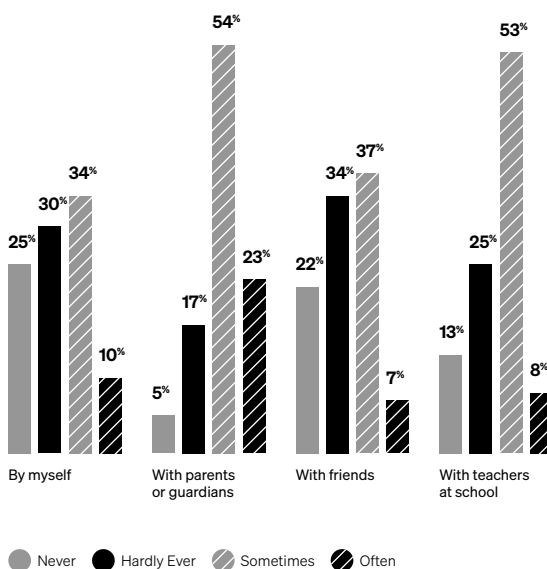


Most young Australians indicate they access the same news media as their parents or guardians (Figure 7), with 51% saying they sometimes do this and 20% saying they often do. Interestingly, children access the same news media as their parents and guardians as often as teens. For instance, 51% of both children and teens sometimes access the same news; and 19% of children often access the same news compared to 21% of teens. This indicates that **most young Australians consume news media that was intended for an adult audience.**

These results remain very similar to 2017.

Figure 8.

Young people access news stories while they are with ...



Not surprisingly, **young Australians are most frequently with their parents or guardians when they consume news stories** (54% sometimes, 23% often, see Figure 8). They also frequently access news with their teachers at school (53% sometimes, 8% often). However, 13% of young Australians say they never access news with their teachers at school (and for children, this figure rises to 15%). A large number of young Australians also access news stories by themselves (34% sometimes, 10% often); and with friends (37% sometimes, 7% often).

Figure 8 also suggests that, overall, **young people see themselves as news consumers ‘sometimes’,** with far fewer young people indicating they ‘often’ consume news.

The results for this question are similar to 2017.

## Where young Australians access news

Figure 9.  
Where young people access news

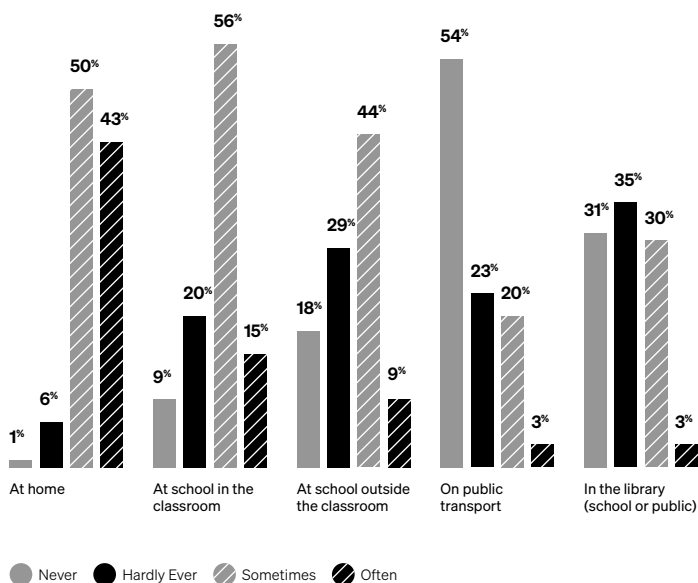


Figure 9 summarises the frequency with which young Australians access news in different places. The **most popular place to access news stories is at home** (50% sometimes, 43% often). However, young Australians also **regularly access news at school**, both in the classroom (56% sometimes, 15% often), and outside the classroom (44% sometimes, 9% often). Young Australians are far less likely to access news stories on public transport, with 54% saying they never do this. School and public libraries are also infrequently used by young Australians to access news, with 31% saying they never do this and 36% saying they hardly ever do this.

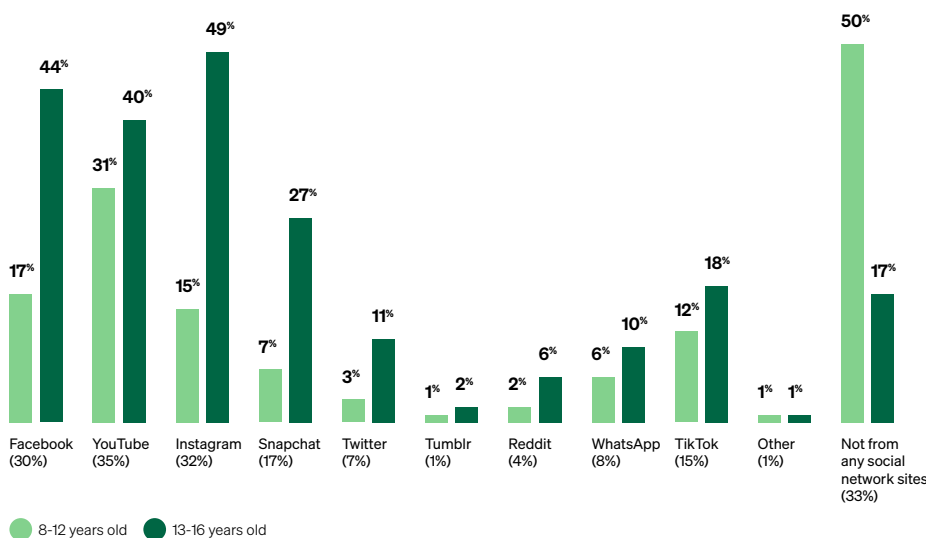
The pattern of responses for this question remains the same as 2017. The greatest change is to the number of young people who access news at school, outside the classroom, with an increase of 7%.



# The use of social media to access news

Figure 10.

The social media sites young people use to get news stories and news headlines



When it comes to using social media to get news stories or headlines (Figure 10), the practices of children and teens are very different. Half (50%) of all children reported that they use social media to get news while more than three quarters (83%) of teens do this. There is **a remarkable increase in the use of social media to get news stories or headlines for both age groups** when compared with 2017.

While Facebook and Tumblr had very small decreases in the number of young people using them to get news, all other social media sites we asked about saw an increase in use (Figure 11). The most statistically significant change is for Instagram, which more than doubled in use to become the second most popular social media source of news stories (it moved from 15% to 32%). Snapchat is another social media site that observed a significant increase (up 7% to 17% in 2020). Reddit showed a small but significant increase from 2% in 2017 to 4% in 2020. We did not ask about TikTok in 2017, since it was not widely used at that time outside of China. Given this, it is remarkable that 15% of young people say they are accessing news stories or headlines through this platform, despite

the limitations around its content (the platform features short-form video less than one minute in length). At the same time, it is important to note that while this question asks young people if they get 'news stories or news headlines' from social media, it does not specify frequency and nor does it specify the type of news or the source of news. Therefore, young people may have interpreted this question quite broadly when considering if their usage of a social media platform was for the purpose of consuming news. We also did not ask about WhatsApp in 2017, but 8% of the respondents said they are using it to access news in 2020.

For teens, the use of all social media platforms we listed showed a statistically significant increase, except for Tumblr<sup>9</sup>. **Instagram was the most popular social media site for teens to get news**, with nearly half of teens (49%) using it for this purpose, up 27% from 2017. This was followed by Facebook, with a drop when compared with 2017 (44% down 7%), YouTube (40%, up 10%) and Snapchat (27%, up 12%). Almost one in five teens (18%) said they are using TikTok to access news in 2020, which we did not ask about in 2017.

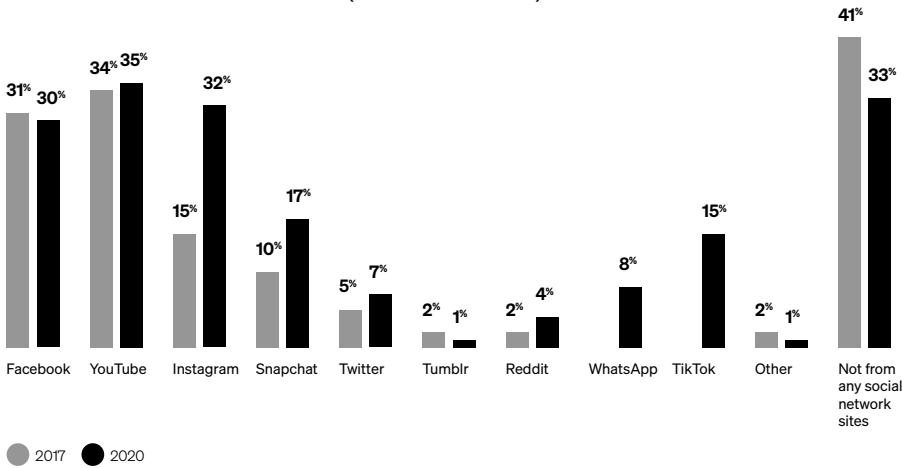
For children, statistically significant changes were found in their use of Instagram and YouTube only. **YouTube was by far the most-used social media platform for children**: 31% say they get news stories or headlines from this site (down 6% from 2017). This was followed by Facebook (17%, up 2%), Instagram (15%, up 5%) and TikTok (12%). These platforms' terms of service require users to be 13 years old – these findings suggest young people are using these sites before they attain this age.

Similar to 2017, we also found **significant gender differences in the use of social media to access news stories in 2020**. We found that girls are more likely than boys to get news stories from Instagram (37% versus 27%), TikTok (20% versus 11%) and Snapchat (20% versus 14%). Boys are more likely to consume news stories through YouTube (38% versus 32%) and WhatsApp (10% versus 6%).

When we compare the findings with 2017 (Figure 11), **the number of young people who do not get news stories or headlines from any social network site has dropped significantly** (down from 41% in 2017 to 33% in 2020).

Figure 11.

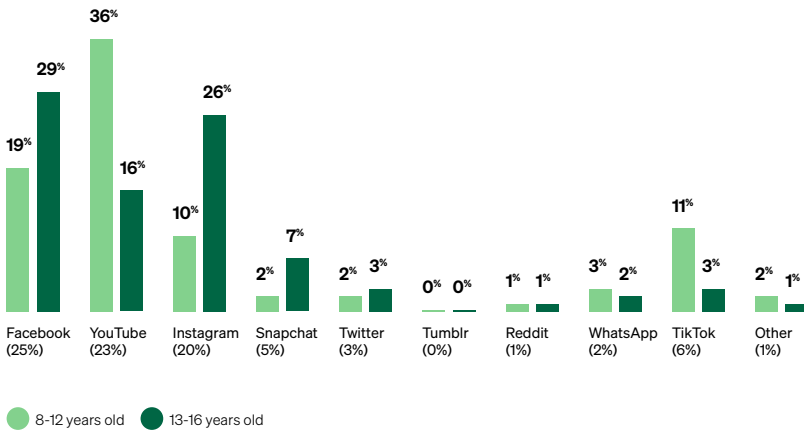
The social media sites young people use to get news stories and headlines (2017 and 2020)



We also asked those participants who reported accessing news stories or headlines from at least one social media site which social media site they prefer to get news stories from (they could choose one option only; Figure 12).

Figure 12.

Preferred social media site for getting news stories and headlines (n=712)



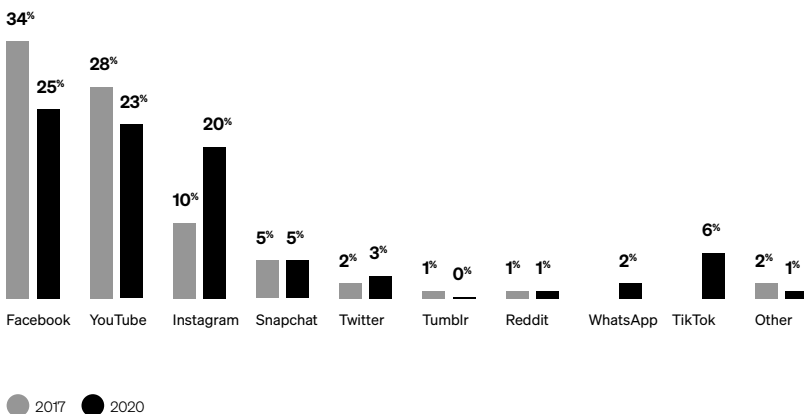
Similar to 2017, the 2020 results show differences in the preferred news source between children and teens. Teens still preferred Facebook to get news stories (29%), followed by Instagram (26%) and YouTube (16%) – these remained in the same preference order as 2017. Children still most preferred YouTube (36%) and Facebook (19) but TikTok (11%) is now ranked third (it was previously Instagram).

However, in 2020, there was a significant decrease in the number of young people who preferred Facebook (25%, down 9%) and YouTube (23%, down 5%), while Instagram showed by far the greatest and most significant overall increase as preferred social media source (20%, up 10%).

As with 2017, the results were different for boys when compared with girls. In 2020, the top three preferred social media news sources were the same for both boys and girls in their respective age categories. However, for the children, significantly more girls preferred to consume news via Instagram (15% versus 6%) and TikTok (16% versus 7%), while significantly more boys preferred YouTube than girls (44% versus 26%).

Figure 13.

Preferred social media site for getting news stories and headlines (2017 and 2020)



## Young people's trust in the news

We asked young people how much they trust the news they get from four different sources: news organisations, friends, family and teachers (Table 2).

**Young people trust their families most of all as sources of news, followed by teachers, news organisations and, least of all, friends.**

This finding remains unchanged from 2017.

Just 19% of young people said they trust the news stories they get from news organisations a lot (down 4% from 2017), compared with 57% who have the same level of trust in the news they get from families (down 1% from 2017). When compared with the teenaged respondents, children indicated the highest level of trust toward both family (63% compared with 50%) and teachers (48% compared with 33%).

Friends fare worst for both children and teens when it comes to trust, with almost one third (31%) of young Australians not trusting news they get from their friends (not too much or not at all). This was followed by news organisations with more than one quarter (26%) of young Australians not trusting news that comes from them much or at all. Teachers and family again fared best with only 12% of young people not trusting the news they get from teachers and 6% not trusting the news they get from family.

Boys aged 13-16 were the most distrustful of the news provided by news organisations, with just 18% trusting this source a lot, close to half trusting them sometimes (49%) and 30% showing low levels of trust (not too much or not at all).

Overall there were only minor changes when comparing responses to this question from 2017 to 2020. However, there is a statistically significant reduction in the level of trust teens have in news organisations between 2017 and 2020, with fewer teens having the highest level of trust in news organisations (from 25% in 2017 to 19% in 2020).

**Table 2.**

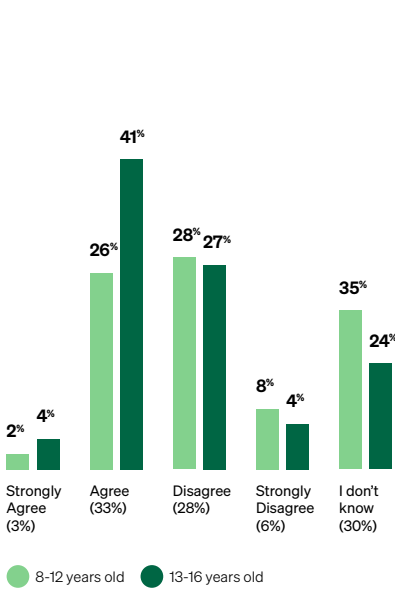
Level of trust of the news young Australian get from different sources.

Overall										
	A lot		Some		Not too much		Not at all		Prefer not to say	
	2017	2020	2017	2020	2017	2020	2017	2020	2017	2020
News organisations	23%	19%	51%	52%	17%	19%	6%	7%	3%	3%
Friends	13%	13%	53%	54%	28%	27%	4%	4%	2%	1%
Family	58%	57%	33%	36%	6%	5%	1%	1%	2%	1%
Teachers	43%	40%	44%	47%	9%	10%	2%	2%	2%	1%
8-12 years										
	A lot		Some		Not too much		Not at all		Prefer not to say	
News organisations	19%		53%		17%		8%		3%	
Friends	12%		53%		27%		5%		2%	
Family	63%		31%		4%		1%		1%	
Teachers	48%		42%		8%		2%		1%	
13-16 years										
	A lot		Some		Not too much		Not at all		Prefer not to say	
News organisations	19%		51%		22%		6%		2%	
Friends	13%		55%		27%		3%		1%	
Family	50%		41%		7%		1%		1%	
Teachers	33%		52%		12%		2%		2%	

The findings highlight that family and teachers are seen to be the most trustworthy news sources. This suggests family and teachers may often act as a news filter for young people, especially for children.

# The ability to tell fake news from real news

**Figure 14.** “I know how to tell fake news stories from real news stories.”

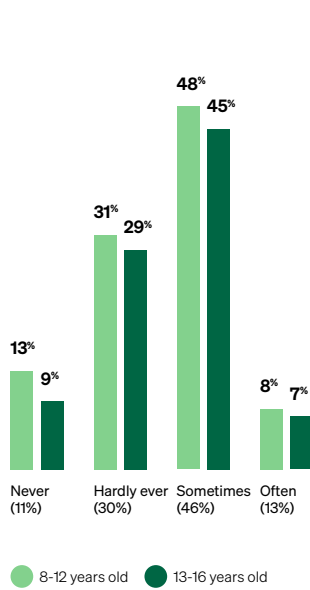


The number of young Australians who say they can distinguish fake news stories<sup>10</sup> from real news stories (36% strongly agree or agree) is slightly higher than those who say they can't do this (34%), as shown in Figure 14.

The **number of young people who agree that they know how to tell fake news from real new stories increased marginally** with a small increase for both age groups moving from 34% in 2017 to 36% in 2020 (up 2%).

For all young people who stated that they use social media to get news or news headlines, we asked how often they try to work out whether news stories they get on the internet are true. Overall, there were mixed responses (Figure 15). Only 13% said that they often try to work out whether a story presented on the internet is true. A large number indicated they sometimes try to verify whether news stories are true (46%); but four in 10 young people indicated they either hardly ever (30%) or never try to do this (11%). The results were very similar to 2017<sup>11</sup>.

**Figure 15.** “How often do you try to work out if news stories you get on the internet are true?” (n=712)

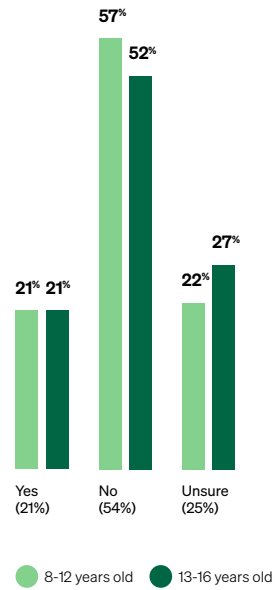


There are **some age disparities when it comes to checking the veracity of news**: 17% of teens often try to work out if news stories they get on the internet are true, but just 8% of children often do. A larger proportion of teens (45%) and children (48%) sometimes check accuracy. Almost one in ten teens never check whether news stories they find online are true (9%), but 4% more children never do this (13%).

Overall **young people try to work out if news stories they get on the internet are true slightly more often** than in 2017 (59% often/sometimes do this in 2020 compared with 54% in 2017).

We also asked young Australians if, in the past six months, they had ever shared a news story with others that they later found out was wrong or untrue (Figure 16). More than half (54%) said they had not shared a news story that was untrue, but one quarter (25%) said they were unsure.

**Figure 16.** “In the past six months, have you shared a news story you later found was untrue?” (n=712)

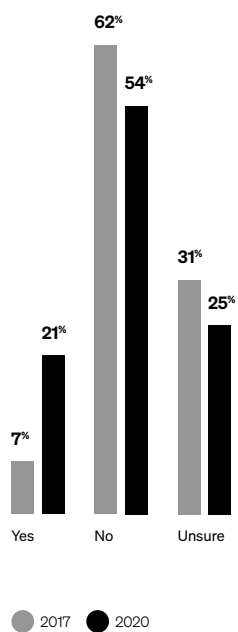


**About 1 in 5 young people (21%) know they shared a news story they later found out to be untrue**, a significant increase (up 14%) from 2017 (Figure 17). The number of young people who were unsure if they had shared a false news story decreased by 6%.

There are statistically significant changes for the number of both children and teens who say they have shared a news story that was untrue, increasing 15% and 14% respectively in 2017. In part this may reflect the overall increase in news consumption on social media. However, it may also relate to our finding that there is more communication about news with family, teachers and friends and this may result in more discussion about stories circulating as news that are untrue, including about stories young people have posted that may have been viewed by family and friends.

Figure 17.

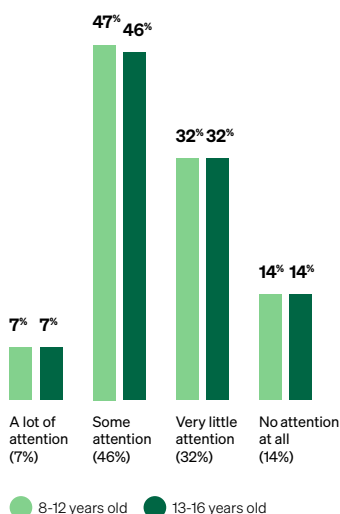
“In the past six months, have you shared a news story you later found was untrue?” (2017 and 2020)



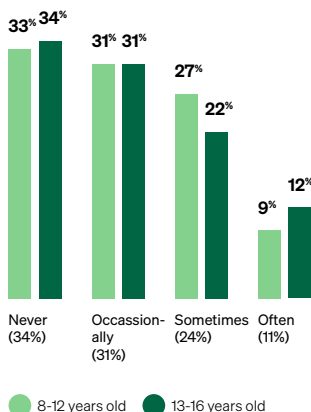
# Taking action to consume and support trustworthy news

How often did you do any of the following activities in the past year?

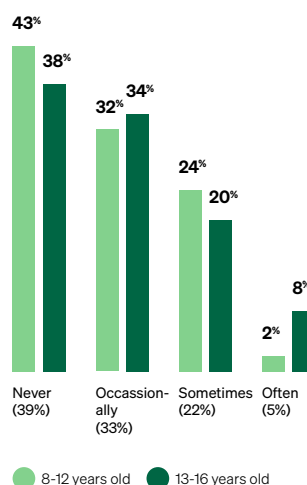
**Figure 18.**  
Attention given to the source of news stories found online (n=712)



**Figure 19.**  
“I decided I would not share a news story because I was unsure if it was true or not.” (n=712)



**Figure 20.**  
“I checked a number of different news sources because I was worried the news story was untrue or inaccurate.” (n=712)



We asked those young people who do use at least one source of social media to get news stories how much attention they pay to thinking about the origin of news stories they access online (Figure 18). **More than half of young Australians indicate they pay at least some attention (46%) or a lot of attention (7%) to the source of news stories.** However, 32% say they pay very little attention and 14% say they pay no attention at all.

There are no dramatic changes to this finding when compared with the results for 2017. The number of young people giving “a lot of attention” dropped from 10% in 2017 to 7% in 2020, while those giving “some attention” increased from 44% to 46% in 2020. The greatest change was with children (8-12 years) with a 7% increase in those paying “some attention” to news sources (increasing from 40% in 2017 to 47% in 2020).

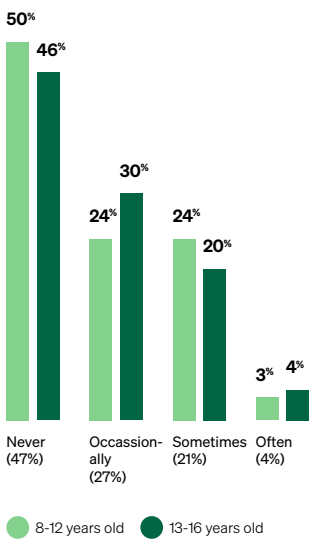
In the 2020 survey we also expanded on the questions we asked to understand the actions young people take to verify news and to help them identify misinformation and disinformation<sup>12</sup>. These questions were only asked to participants who indicated they use at least one form of social media to get news stories or news headlines. The results (Figures 19 to 24) show that **fewer than half of young Australians who get news from social media sites use any of the basic methods we listed that can be used to check the veracity of news media and to address unreliable news on a regular basis (often or sometimes).**

The activity young people were most likely, by far, to carry out is discussing a news story they are unsure about with someone they trust, with 14% stating they do this often and 38% sometimes. This again highlights that **news literacy practices are interpersonal and social.**

Perhaps of most concern is that 8% of young people who access news from social media sites (Figure 10) never carry out any of the six activities listed, even though they do get news from social media. Further investigation is required to understand whether young people do not carry out the activities listed on a regular basis because they don’t want to, they do not have the time to do so, or they do not know how to do this.

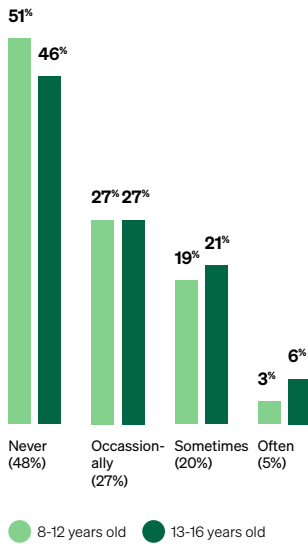
**Figure 21.**

“I changed from one news source to another because I thought it was more trustworthy.” (n=712)



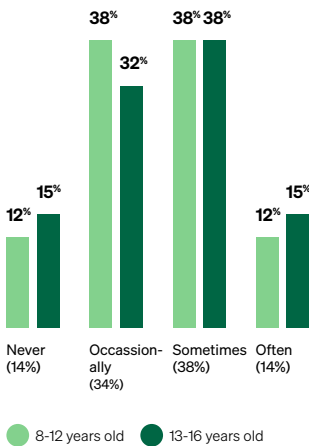
**Figure 22.**

“I stopped using a particular news source because I was unsure about how much I could trust the reporting.” (n=712)



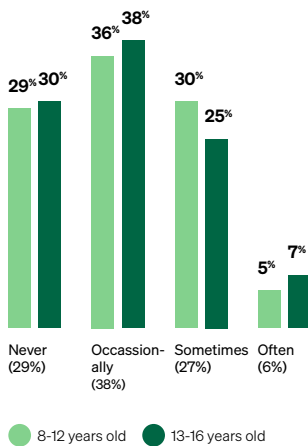
**Figure 23.**

“I discussed a news story with a person I trust because I was unsure if it was true.” (n=712)



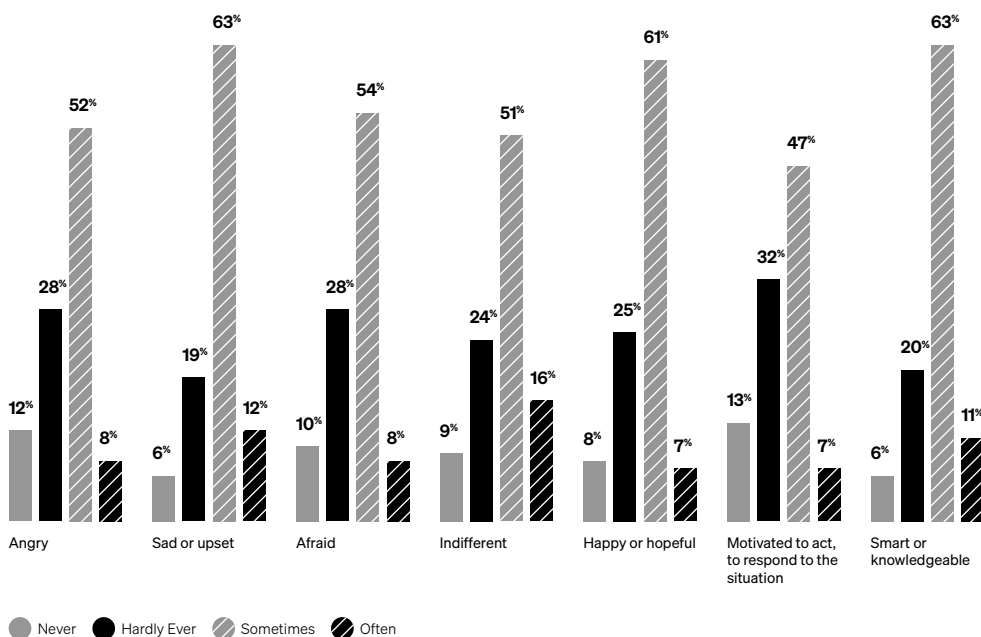
**Figure 24.**

I stopped paying attention to news shared by someone because I was unsure whether to trust that person (n = 712)



# How news makes children feel

Figure 25.  
How children feel when they consume news media



Both **children and teens have strong positive and negative emotions in response to news media** (Figure 25).

On the positive side, 74% of young people said that consuming news media made them feel smart or knowledgeable (11% often, 63% sometimes) and 68% said it made them feel happy or hopeful (7% often, 61% sometimes). More than half (54%) said they sometimes feel motivated to act or respond to a situation.

Nearly twice as many teens (11%) say they often feel angry as a response to news media when compared with children (6%). **Girls are more likely than boys to report often or sometimes feeling angry (64% versus 57%), sad/upset (80% versus 70%) or afraid (69% versus 55%) as a response to the news media they consume** (Table 3). They are also more likely than boys to report feeling motivated to act (61% versus 49%).

The number of young people who often/sometimes feel negative feelings as a response to news media has increased when compared with 2017, with feeling angry and sad both up 4% and feeling afraid up 5%.

In terms of positive emotions, the number of young people who often/sometimes feel motivated to respond to the news also increased (by 4% for boys and 10% for girls). There was also an increase in the number of young people who feel smart/knowledgeable (5% for boys and 3% for girls). The numbers of both boys and girls who feel happy or hopeful as a response to news media decreased slightly (1% and 3% respectively) when compared with 2017.

These findings may have been influenced by the current news cycle during the data collection period, which followed a focus on severe bushfires and overlapped with the early stages of a national response to COVID-19. However, in the open-ended questions included in this survey we note that just two young people explicitly mentioned the bushfires, while 10 mentioned COVID-19. For the latter group, most responses focused on being frustrated in the belief that news media were scaring people or are being sensationalist in their reporting of COVID-19.

**The findings highlight the need to carefully consider the emotional impact of news media on young people.** This is particularly important during news cycles that are upsetting or distressing for young people.

We asked young Australians if they believe they are able to talk about news stories that distress or upset them with their family or teachers (Figure 26 and Figure 27). **Most agree they can talk to their parents about distressing news** (56% agree, 28% strongly agree), but **fewer say they can talk to their teachers** (55% agree, 6% strongly agree).

More than one in five (22%) say they can't talk to their teachers about upsetting news stories, while 8% say they can't talk to their parents about upsetting news stories. There are many more young people who feel unsure if they can talk to teachers about news that distresses them (17%) when compared with those who feel unsure if they can talk to their family (8%). There were no significant differences across age and gender in relation to this question.



Figure 26.

“I am able to talk about news stories that distress or upset me with my family.”

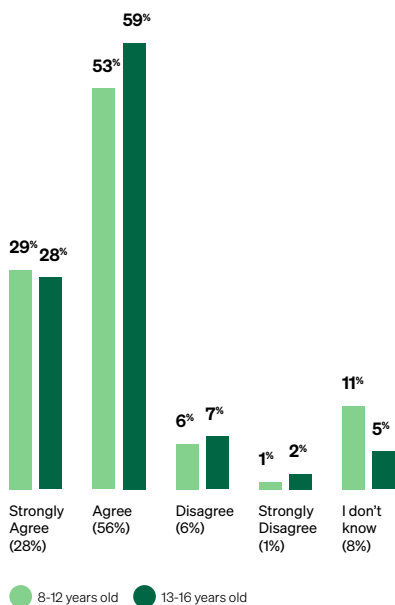


Figure 27.

“I am able to talk about news stories that distress or upset me with my teachers.”

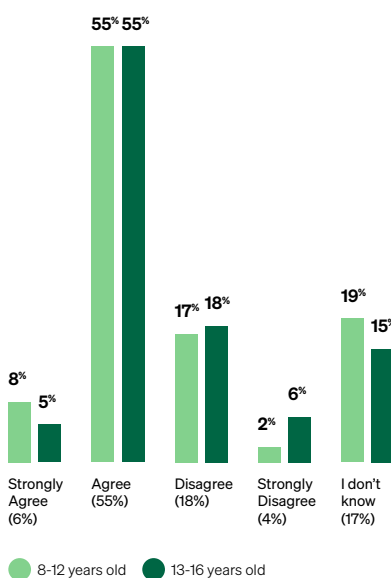


Table 3.

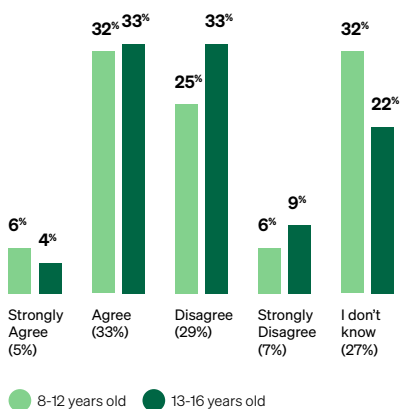
How boys and girls feel when they consume news media

	Boys (n=552)				Girls (n=517)			
	Never	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Often	Never	Hardly ever	Sometimes	Often
Angry	13%	30%	50%	7%	10%	26%	54%	10%
Sad or upset	8%	22%	61%	9%	5%	15%	66%	14%
Afraid	13%	32%	47%	7%	8%	24%	61%	8%
Indifferent	9%	22%	51%	17%	9%	25%	50%	15%
Happy or hopeful	9%	25%	61%	5%	8%	24%	60%	8%
Motivated to act, to respond to the situation	16%	36%	41%	8%	10%	29%	54%	7%
Smart or knowledgeable	7%	19%	62%	12%	6%	21%	63%	10%

The results to these questions are fairly consistent when compared with 2017, although 3% more young Australians believe they can talk about the news stories that distress them with family in 2020 and 3% more young people feel they can do this with their teachers. The most remarkable change since 2017 was a 7% increase in the number of teens who feel they can talk to their teachers about news stories that distress or upset them.

# Perceptions of bias in the news

**Figure 28.** “News treats people of different cultural backgrounds equally fairly.”

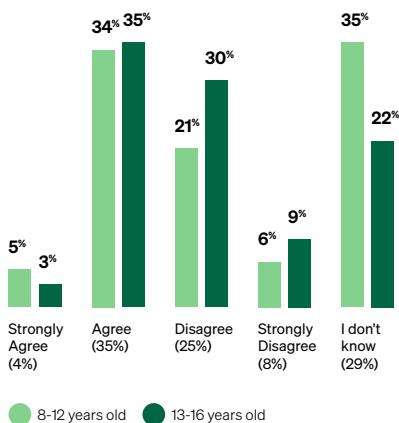


**More than one third of young Australians (36%) perceive bias when it comes to the treatment of people from different cultural backgrounds in news media** (see Figure 28). A similar number of young people believe people from different cultural backgrounds are treated “equally fairly” by the news media (38%). A high number of young people (27%) say they ‘don’t know’ if this is the case (32% for children and 22% of teens), suggesting this may be something they have not thought about or feel they are able to critique, or perhaps in some cases this is because they are not frequently consuming news.

No significant gender difference was observed in the perception of news bias towards people from different cultural backgrounds. However, significantly more teenaged girls agree that there is bias in news reporting when compared with girls who are children (34% compared with 22%). An equal number of teenaged boys and boys who are children believe that people of different race and ethnic backgrounds are treated equally fairly in the news (36% for each).

There was a large increase in the proportion of children disagreeing that people of different backgrounds are treated fairly

**Figure 29.** “News treats men and women equally fairly.”

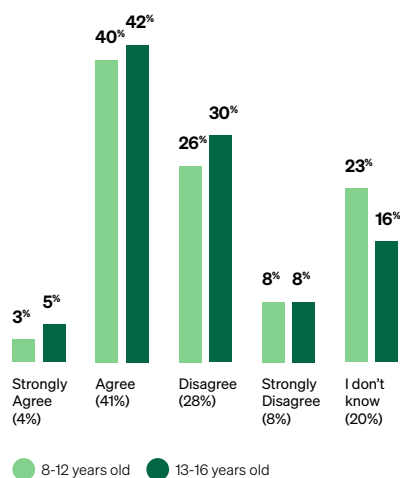


(up 6% to 31% in 2020). Correspondingly, the percentage of children who responded “I don’t know” to this question dropped significantly from 39% to 32% in 2020, suggesting more children may have reflected on the issue of news bias. Overall, however, boys were less likely to perceive this bias in 2020 (down 3% from 2017). On the other hand, there was a 4% increase in the number of girls who perceive this bias.

There were similar results when we asked about perceptions of gender bias in terms of the treatment of men and women in the news (Figure 29). Overall 39% of young Australians believe men and women are treated equally fairly in news media, while 33% think this is not the case and 29% say they don’t know. Significant age differences were found in young Australians’ perception of gender bias in news reporting, with 12% more teens believing women are not treated fairly when compared with children. Teenaged girls were most likely to perceive bias in news reporting with 43% stating men and women are not treated equally fairly.

Compared with 2017 there was a small but significant increase in those who believe women and men are not treated equally

**Figure 30.** “Young people often appear on the news talking about things that affect them.”



(increasing from 27% to 33%). Young Australians who responded “I don’t know” dropped significantly from 33% to 29% in 2020, which is largely related to children’s responses dropping significantly from 41% to 35%. Girls’ perception of gender bias in news reporting in 2020 increased significantly from 2017 (up 5%), whereas no significant difference was found in boys.

Many young people also perceive biases in terms of the inclusion of young people in the news. Figure 30 shows that more young Australians believe that young people do often appear on the news talking about things that affect them (45%) when compared with those who do not believe this (36%).

Young Australians who agree/strongly agree that young people do appear on the news to talk about issues that affect them increased significantly from 41% in 2017 to 45% in 2020. This increase is largely attributed to the increased number of children who agree young people do appear on the news to talk about issues that affect them (increasing from 33% in 2017 to 40% in 2020). Among girls, there was a significant increase in the proportion who agree with the statement (34% versus 42%).

# News topics of importance to young people

**Table 4.**  
Level of importance of news topics to young Australians

Overall	Not at all important			Very important	
	1	2	3	4	5
News about crime and violence	11%	21%	33%	23%	11%
News about health issues involving doctors and medicine	9%	15%	33%	26%	17%
News about the economy and employment issues	24%	25%	30%	16%	5%
News about education and schools	8%	13%	33%	30%	16%
News about events and issues in your local community	7%	13%	32%	32%	17%
News about celebrities and entertainment	23%	21%	30%	20%	7%
News about technology	6%	11%	32%	31%	19%
News about sport	20%	18%	26%	20%	16%
News about politics including what happens in Parliament	32%	27%	26%	11%	4%
+News about accidents	13%	22%	36%	22%	8%
+News about environment and climate change	8%	11%	31%	27%	23%
8-12 years old					
News about crime and violence	15%	24%	33%	19%	10%
News about health issues involving doctors and medicine	9%	17%	31%	26%	18%
News about the economy and employment issues	31%	23%	29%	13%	4%
News about education and schools	8%	12%	32%	29%	19%
News about events and issues in your local community	6%	14%	29%	32%	18%
News about celebrities and entertainment	24%	20%	30%	20%	6%
News about technology	7%	11%	34%	30%	18%
News about sport	17%	18%	27%	20%	18%
News about politics including what happens in Parliament	36%	23%	28%	9%	4%
+News about accidents	15%	24%	34%	20%	8%
+News about environment and climate change	8%	10%	31%	28%	24%
13-16 years old					
News about crime and violence	8%	18%	35%	28%	12%
News about health issues involving doctors and medicine	9%	13%	36%	26%	17%
News about the economy and employment issues	17%	26%	30%	20%	7%
News about education and schools	8%	15%	34%	31%	12%
News about events and issues in your local community	7%	12%	34%	32%	15%
News about celebrities and entertainment	22%	22%	30%	20%	7%
News about technology	5%	12%	31%	33%	19%
News about sport	24%	17%	25%	20%	14%
News about politics including what happens in Parliament	27%	32%	24%	13%	4%
+News about accidents	10%	20%	38%	24%	8%
+News about environment and climate change	9%	12%	32%	26%	21%

Note: + is used to indicate news categories that were not included in the 2017 survey.

The three news topics that young Australians rated as most important to them (ranked 4 or 5 with 5 representing 'very important') are technology (50%, down 2% from 2017) environment and climate change (50%), and events and issues in their local community (49%, up 6% from 2017, see Table 4). As with 2017, **politics, including what happens in Parliament, was rated the least important news topic by young people** (15%, down 3% from 2017).

Although the results between teens and children was similar overall, there was one major difference. While news about the environment and climate change and news about events and issues in their local community were in the top 3 categories for both age groups, news about education and schools was a greater priority for children, while news about technology was a greater priority for teens.

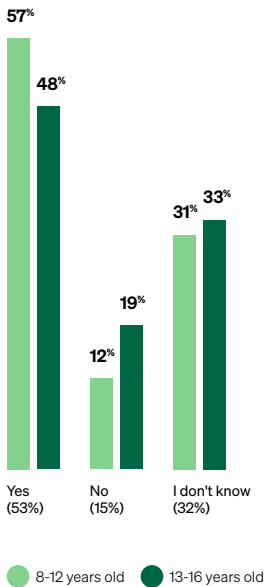
**There were significant differences in the news topics of most interest to boys when compared with girls.** More boys rated news about technology highly (as 4 and 5) than did girls (59% compared with 41%), and sport (48% compared with 23%). Girls rated news about celebrities and entertainment more highly than boys (35% compared with 20%).

Compared to 2017, news about health issues became more important to more young people, with a 7% increase in those rating it as important (rank 4 and 5) and 9% less rating it not important (rank 1 and 2, 24% versus 33%);

This was also the case with news about education and schools, with a 6% decrease among those rating it not important (rank 1 and 2, 21% versus 27%) and a 7% increase among young people who think it important (rank 4 or 5, 46% versus 39%) when compared with 2017.

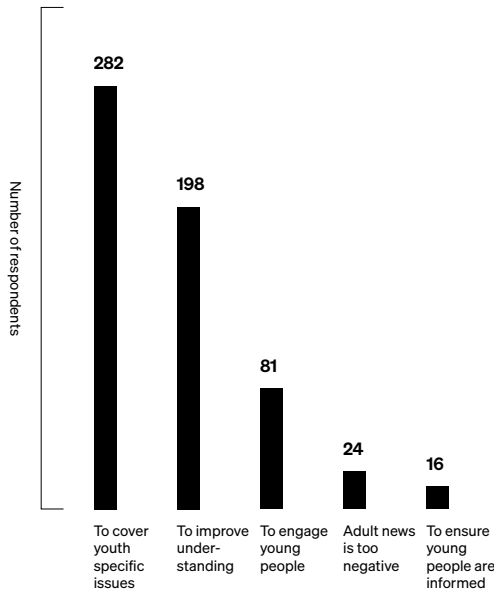
# News made for young people

**Figure 31.**  
“Do you think young people need news media that is made just for them?”



Young Australians have mixed opinions about whether or not they want to access news that is made specifically for their age group (Figure 31). Overall, **more than half (53%) of young Australians agree that young people should have their own news**, while 32% say they do not know, which may in part indicate a lack of exposure to news oriented towards young people. Girls aged 8-12 indicate the strongest preference for having news made specifically for young people (with 57% agreeing); however, 48% of teens (aged 13-16) agree that they want news targeted at their age group.

**Figure 32.**  
Why do young people need news media made specifically for them? (n=726)



There was a **significant increase in the number of respondents who agree that young people need news made just for them** when compared with 2017 (up 8%), with significant increases in both age groups. The greater increase is in the teens group, increasing from 39% in 2017 to 48% in 2020. This is an interesting finding given that Australian news options for children has increased in the ensuing period, with News Corp's *KidsNews* online news website starting around the time of our survey in 2017, and the independent *Squiz Kids* daily news podcast starting in early 2020<sup>13</sup>. Along with the long-running popular news program for children, ABC's *BTN* (Behind the News) these news programs are all designed to be suitable for primary-aged school children. However, there are no Australian news options designed specifically for teenagers aged 13-18 years, despite the fact that nearly half of teens believe young people need news made just for them.

When we asked young people to explain their responses with an open ended survey question, for those who stated young people *do not* need news made especially for them or who did not know (15% of young

people), the main reasons provided related to issues of wanting to **avoid “dumbing down” the news**, or a concern that it would be pointless, as **young people are disinterested** in the news. A number of teenagers felt “news is news” and there was **no reason to present it differently for young people**.

Figure 32 categorises the main themes uncovered in the responses provided by those who stated young people *do need* news made especially for them (53% of young people). The most commonly cited reason was the need to **cover youth-specific issues in the news**. Additional themes identified the need to have targeted media which are **easier for young people to understand**, and that young people required media which was capable of **engaging** them. A small number of respondents also identified issues of the **negativity of adult news** and a need to **ensure that young people are informed**. Younger respondents focused on news needing to be made more **age-appropriate** – less violent and distressing but also easier to understand and **“less boring”**.

***“The news reported would be similar either way. Young people should know the issues and events that the world is going through so that they are more aware of their community. There shouldn’t be a distinguishable difference in the target audience other than possible sugar coating of events which shouldn’t be promoted and can be seen as underestimating young people’s interest about the news.”*** Girl, 16, New South Wales

***“We cannot afford to censor the troubles and hardships that are open to the country if we want future leaders that are even greater than our current ones.”*** Girl 16, Queensland

Young people in favour of news media made especially for young people stated:

***“I think it’s good that we know what is going on but the news can be quite scary and depressing.”*** Girl, 8, Western Australia

***“The adult news can be hard to understand and sometimes upsetting. News for children can be filtered for us to understand and be positive news. I understand that not all news is positive, but even sad events can be made easier for children to intake.”*** Girl, 9, Victoria

***“A positive news channel for kids with all the good stuff would be good, cos [sic] adult news has heaps of violence and sad stuff.”*** Boy, 9, New South Wales

***“I really like the ABC BTN news breaks. They give the information in easier to understand ways than some of the normal news.”*** Girl, 12, Victoria.

***“I think if it was aimed at kids more kids would watch and care more about what is going on around them.”*** Boy, 13, Victoria

***“As young people, we have different beliefs as opposed to our parents/older guardians regarding race, religion, gender and sexuality, mainly. Having news media directed towards young people would allow those particular topics to be better expressed.”*** Girl, 13, Queensland

***“Because everything is seen from an adult’s point of view and never seen from a child’s point of view.”*** Girl, 13, South Australia

***“It would be good to have news for teenagers, there’s nothing for older kids. If there is then it’s too babyish or totally boring for adults”.*** Boy, 13, Queensland

***“Young people think, talk, act and understand things differently to adults because some are not mature yet. They should have news and media made just for them with simpler words and meanings so that they can understand the stories better.”*** Girl, 14, Victoria

***“Adult news is boring and I don’t understand what they are talking about most of the time. It’s just not relevant to me.”*** Girl, 14, Western Australia

***“When I was in primary school, we used to watch a news show called BTN which was made by young people for young people and I understood the language and the stories were made for young people.”*** Girl, 14, Victoria

***“Because adults have little idea or care of issues facing us youth – such as the environment, suicide, education.”*** Girl, 16, Victoria

Young people not in favour of news media made especially for young people stated:

***“I’m not really interested in that stuff. My mum tells me what I need to know that’s been in the news like the coronavirus”*** Girl, 12, Queensland

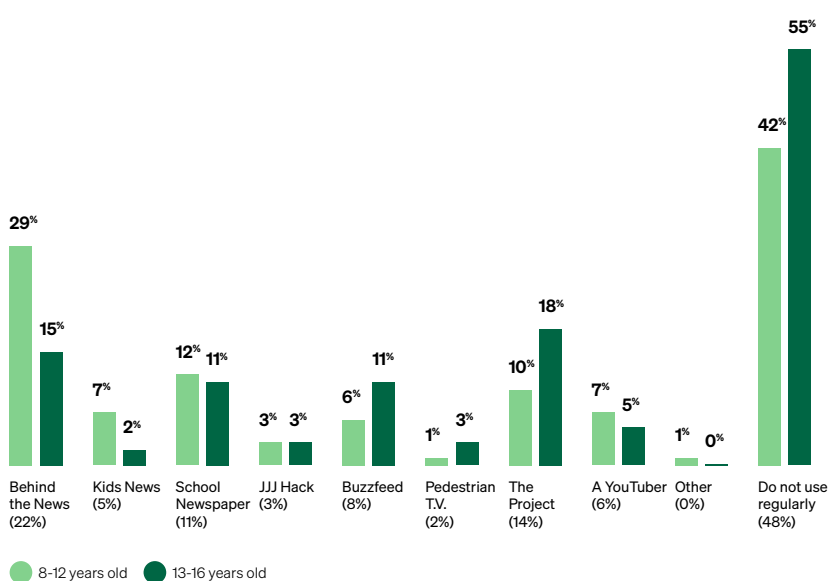
***“I enjoy watching the news with my parents at home on the television.”*** Boy, 10, Queensland

***“... we are now changing from children into adults and how are we meant to do that if we cannot be trusted reading the normal news like a normal person.”*** Girl, 13, Western Australia

***“I don’t want to be patronised.”*** Girl, 16, News South Wales

Figure 33.

Regular (once a month or more) use of news made for young people



*Behind the News* (BTN), which has been broadcast in Australia for more than 50 years, is the most popular youth-focused Australian news source: it is used regularly (once a month or more) by 22% of young Australians (Figure 33). *BTN* is used most by children with 29% of 8 to 12-year-olds saying they use it. The second most popular program was *The Project* with 14% of young people using it once a month or more, but 18% of teens.

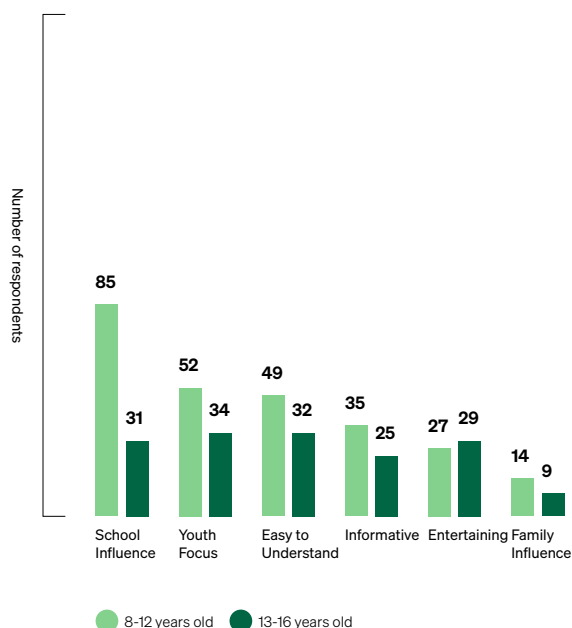
Close to half of young people (48%) say they do not regularly access news specifically made for young people (55% of teens), perhaps indicating a lack of options of Australian news media directed at this age group, but also reflecting some young people's disinterest in this type of news program. However, this figure is a significant drop from the 56% who indicated this in 2017. This may at least in part be attributed to the fact that we listed many additional news options that are not explicitly marketed as news made for young people, but are clearly more 'youthful' in their approach or style, such as the online news and entertainment website *Buzzfeed* and Network 10's news and current affair television program *The Project*.

We had anticipated we may find more young people getting news from a YouTuber than was the case. Recent research in the United States, which suggested that more than half of young people in the USA are using celebrity and YouTubers to get news<sup>14</sup>, and we were keen to see if this trend was reflected in Australia. However, we found just 6% of young Australians indicated they use a YouTuber to get news (7% children and 5% teens). When we asked these young people (n=65) which YouTuber/s they use, 33 different YouTubers were mentioned. While eight respondents noted they watch multiple YouTubers, no single YouTuber was mentioned by more than four young people and 26 were mentioned by one person only. A closer look at all the YouTubers who were mentioned twice or more reveals that the respondents have taken a very broad view of what constitutes news or have not understood the question. Two of the Top 10 YouTubers listed provide news about games, two are primarily Let's Play gamers and another provides commentary about internet culture. One YouTuber listed takes a strange news event and uses this for a comedy sketch and another claims to investigate conspiracy theories. While there were some YouTubers listed who do engage with news

and provide news commentary, these were each only listed by a single respondent. Thus, there is no evidence that YouTubers are starting to replace more traditional news media sources for young people.

We also asked the 52% of young people who consume news media made especially for young people what they think of the news they consume and why they consume it (via an open-ended question). For children, the **school environment** was the most significant influence mentioned on the choice of news media, with the *Behind the News* (BTN) program – often incorporated into school curricula – mentioned in particular. Other significant themes that emerged to explain why the respondents consume youth-oriented news media were their **focus on youth issues**, and because they are **easy to understand, informative and entertaining**. The importance of **family influences in making decisions about what news to consume**, particularly parents, was also listed by a small number of respondents.

**Figure 34.**  
Why do you use news media made for young people? (n = 568)



**Why do you use news media for young people?**

*“They are fun and I learn a lot about the world from them.”* Girl, 8, Victoria

*“I like BTN as I understand it and it has cool stories on interesting things.”* Boy, 8, New South Wales

*“It’s what my folks allow me to watch.”* Girl, 8, Queensland

*“It makes it easy to understand and explains things in a way that young people can relate to.”* Boy, 8, South Australia

*“I really like BTN when we watch it at school and sometimes I show stuff to mum when I get home.”* Boy, 9, Queensland

*“We watch BTN for school because our teacher makes us. It is sometimes quite interesting.”* Boy, 9, Victoria

*“I think BTN is a good one to use because the person who is speaking is clear and easy to understand. I like KidsNews because it is not just easy it has some things for us to work out for ourselves. We also do KidsNews at school.”* Girl, 9, Tasmania

*“They are really good and help me understand what is going on in the world in language that I can understand. It makes it easier to tell what I’ve learnt with my family without getting confused.”* Girl, 10, Victoria

*“I listen to JJJ Hack because my parents have it on in the car.”* Girl, 11, Sydney

*“My parents watch The Project, and I like how they can make some of the news funny, but also know when to be respectful.”* Boy, 12, New South Wales

*“I would rather news that makes sense to me and that affects me. I don’t want to hear about sport or stock markets. Kids’ news would need to be happier than what we hear on tv now.”* Boy, 15, New South Wales

*“We have different problems to older people and are interested in different matters like climate change.”* Girl, 16, Queensland

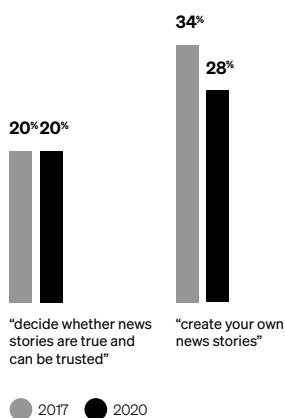
*“Because adults have little idea or care of issues facing us youth – such as the environment, suicide, education.”* Girl, 16, Victoria

*“Buzzfeed publications are generally more friendly and easier to read in one sitting. And The Project since it is sometimes quite humorous.”* Girl, 16, Queensland

## News literacy education in school

Figure 35.

“Have you received any lessons at school to help you ...?”



We explored young Australians’ news literacy education at school by asking the respondents about their critical engagement with news stories and the opportunities they have been afforded to create their own news stories in the classroom (Figure 35).

**Just one in five (20%) young Australians said they had a lesson during the past year to help them decide whether news stories are true and can be trusted** and this was the same for children and teens. While this figure has increased 3% for children, there is a 4% drop for teens when compared with 2017.

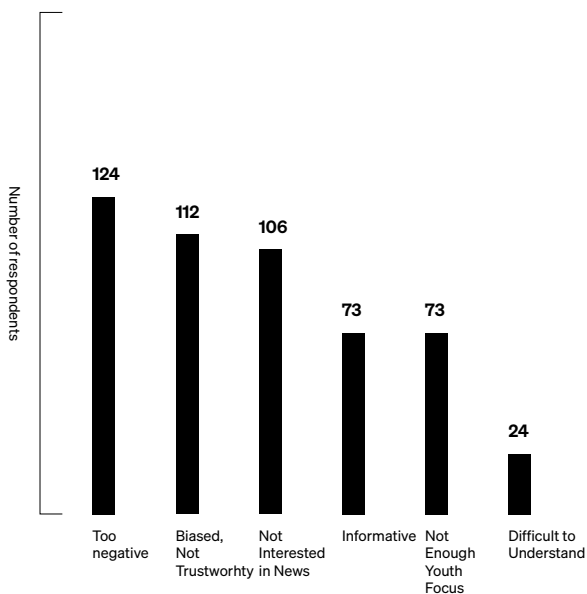
**Fewer young Australians (28%) say they have participated in lessons at school over the past year to help them create their own news stories** when compared with 2017 (down 6%). This includes 26% of teens (4% fewer than in 2017) and 29% of children (8% fewer than in 2017).

Together, these **findings suggest that overall news media literacy education has not increased in schools** during the period 2017 to 2020, contrary to our expectations, given the increased public focus on misinformation and disinformation.



# How can Australian news media better serve young people?

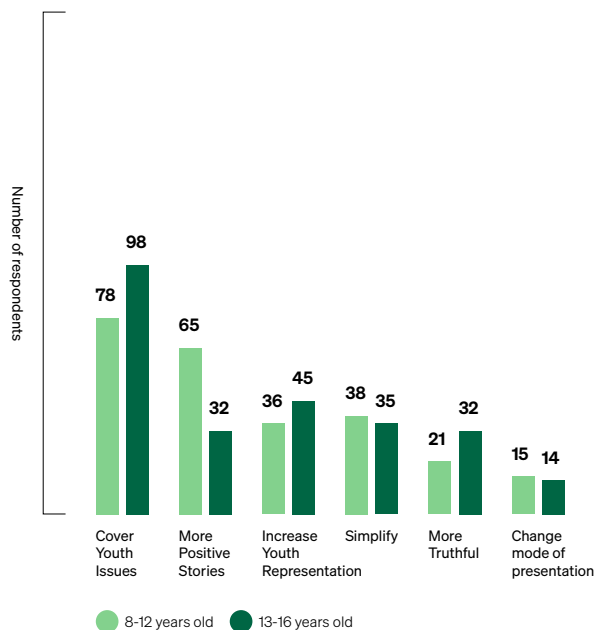
**Figure 36.**  
Are the Australian news media doing a good job?



We asked young people if the Australian news media are doing a good job, from their point of view, and to explain their responses in an open-ended question (Figure 36).

Most responses to this question focused on negative assessments. The most frequent theme identified was that respondents feel the news is **too negative** in the selection of issues it portrays. A second theme was that the news presented is **biased or otherwise unable to be trusted**, with particular reference to fake news. A number of respondents suggested they had **insufficient interest in the news** to be able to provide an opinion. While a number of responses identified the **positive and informative** role played by news media, the remaining themes were related to negative appraisals of a lack of a focus on **issues relevant to young people**, together with news media being **difficult for young people to understand**.

**Figure 37.**  
What can Australian news media do to make the news more appealing to young people?



Six main themes emerged from the responses provided to a question about how respondents thought news media could be made more appealing to young people (Figure 37). The most frequently made proposal was to include greater coverage of issues which were of direct **relevance to young people**, with the environment and climate change also cited as a topic which was particularly important to future generations. For younger respondents, the theme of **positivity** was particularly important, with suggestions that news should balance more good news stories with less coverage of upsetting topics. Other themes covered the need to **simplify the news** by using language and explanations appropriate to younger audiences, to include greater **representation of young people** in the presentation and reporting of news, and for the news to be **more truthful** by being more factual and including less opinion. Finally, a small number of respondents also identified the need to use **modes of presentation** that better engage with the media habits of young people – particularly their use of social media.

**What do you think Australian news media could do to make the news more appealing to young people?**

**“Tell the truth, be honest with every story.”**  
Girl, 16 Queensland

**“Have more stories that affect young people and use young people ambassadors.”**  
Girl, 8, South Australia

**“Simple and easy to understand information with lots of pictures.”** Boy, 10, Victoria

**“Talk more regularly about technology and solutions for the future.”** Boy, 11, New South Wales

**“Explain things better – give background to the story, not just presume that we know what the issue is already.”** Girl, 12, Western Australia

**“Have stories about the things we enjoy and maybe stories on children’s sports not just adult sports”.** Girl, 14, Victoria

**“More accessible sites on social media/ apps and through schools.”** Girl, 15, New South Wales

# Conclusion

This report indicates that in the three years since we undertook our first survey of young Australians' news practices and experiences, while some findings have remained constant, there have also been some significant changes. Several issues have emerged from the findings that require ongoing attention from parents/guardians, policy makers, politicians, teachers, news producers and researchers.

## Social news consumption is a significant trend that requires attention.

As young Australians' news consumption becomes more social, and family and social media are becoming more frequent news sources, there are likely to be consequences for the relationship young people have with traditional news media. Traditional news media's role in young Australians' lives is likely to differ from that experienced by previous generations. If they wish to remain relevant, news producers need to consider the nature of their relationship with young people, and the kinds of news they produce for them. They may benefit from producing age-appropriate news, with over half of young people indicating that they support news being made for their age group, including a greater representation of young people and relevant issues. They would very clearly benefit from including news stories about the issues that affect and interest young people, given that most young Australians believe news media organisations do not cover the news issues that interest them most and have no idea what their lives are like.

## Young Australians do not trust news media organisations.

Perhaps connected to the increase in the consumption of social news, young Australians trust their family more than any other news source and few have a strong trust in news organisations. If news media organisations wish to develop their relationship with young people, they will need to work hard to regain their trust. More broadly, we believe effective education about misinformation and disinformation, and the role of news media in democratic systems, will improve young Australians' trust in those news organisations with fair and transparent editorial processes.

## Misinformation and disinformation is not being challenged by young Australians.

Even as they get older, a large number of young Australians do not challenge the news they consume by checking the source of a story. In addition, only one third of young Australians agree that they can tell fake news from real news. This has changed little since 2017, despite the considerable amount of attention given to this issue over the past four years. There is an urgent need for policy makers, particularly education authorities, to address this issue.

**Adults need to initiate supportive conversations with young Australians about news.**

This report shows that since 2017, there has been an increase in how distressing and frightening news is for young Australians. It is possible that reporting about the impacts of the Black Summer Bushfires and the COVID-19 pandemic accounts for this increase. However, this draws attention to the need for adults to be aware of the impact of news on young people, and to initiate supportive conversations about news. This seems particularly important given that a significant number of young Australians access the same news as their parents/guardians. Adults in supportive roles should also be aware of the impact of news on young Australians' mental health and be prepared to seek the support of counselling and support services for young people who are in distress.

**There is an urgent need to support media literacy initiatives, in and out of school.**

Since 2017, there has been no change in the amount of media literacy young Australians say they receive at school, with only one in five young people saying they learned critical skills for responding to news in the year prior to the survey. This is surprising, given the amount of attention paid to 'fake news' over the past three years. As noted in the report's introduction, our research shows that teachers face some significant challenges in providing media literacy skills in schools, but this should not deter policy makers from making media literacy a priority. We also see a need for continued support for out-of-school and supplementary educational resources to continue to be produced by a range of agencies. For instance, resources for parents/guardians and other significant adults would assist with the development of young Australians' media literacy skills.

**Many young Australians regularly consume news, and care about its future.**

Despite some of the more challenging findings outlined in this report, it is also clear that many young Australians are regular news consumers, and they believe it should play an important role in their lives. Indeed, more young people reported regular engagement with news in 2020 than in 2017, either directly through news media or through friends, family and teachers. In addition, many young Australians said that consuming news made them feel knowledgeable and motivated to take action. With increased attention to the kinds of news being produced for young people, more opportunity to develop media literacy skills and greater attention given to young people's voices, it is likely that young Australians' news media practices will become a more rewarding and fulfilling experience for them. This can only have a positive impact on Australian society.

# Methodology

## The survey process

Table 5.  
Number of participants

2a. Overall									
	Total	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	NT	ACT
Total	1069	302	297	237	104	90	20	6	13
Gender									
Boys	552	154	147	123	63	44	13	3	5
Girls	517	148	150	114	41	46	7	3	8
Age									
8-12 years old	545	144	158	120	56	49	10	3	5
13-16 years old	524	158	139	117	48	41	10	3	8

Our online survey was conducted between February 28 and March 16 2020. We employed one of Australia's largest and most established online survey companies to carry out the survey.

To ensure widespread representation we used representative interlocking age (8-12 and 13-16) and gender (boy and girl) categories. We also included representative interlocking state (NSW/ACT, VIC/TAS, QLD, SA/NT, WA) and region categories (metro, inner regional, outer regional/remote). Targets for each of these categories were set according to Australian Bureau of Statistics proportions.

The participants are broken down in Table 5 by gender and age categories.

Overall, 2295 adults received an invitation for their child to participate in a survey. At this stage, to avoid participation bias, no information was provided about the survey's focus. These adults were initially asked their postcode and whether they had any children aged 8-16 years. A total of 627 (29%) stated they did not have children in this age group and were screened out on this basis, while 17 (0.7%) were screened out for providing an invalid postcode. In addition, 247 (11%) respondents were screened out because the quotas for gender, age or location were already met. If adults stated they did have a child or children aged 8-16 years they were asked whether they would permit them to participate in the survey after reading an information sheet about the survey's focus. We also suggested that a parent or guardian be present to assist children aged 12 and under with any questions in the survey they did not understand. At this stage 189 (8%) adults declined to invite their child to participate or their child declined to participate. Finally, 9 (0.3%) respondents were screened out because of inconsistencies made between responses from parents and children regarding the child's age and/or gender, while an

additional 98 (4%) were screened out because they did not complete the survey. Later, 38 respondents were removed during quality assurance checks carried out by the survey company. These checks included detecting participants whose responses identify them as flatliners (who respond to questions the same way), speeders (those who have completed the survey in too short a time) and also checks on duplicates (including checks for a repeat of the IP address since we included one child per household only).

## Survey Design

Most of the questions in our survey were based on one designed and implemented in the United States by Common Sense Media. We adapted this survey with their permission. The Common Sense survey was, in turn, based partly on a survey designed and implemented by Pew Research Center for an adult population. After preliminary testing with young Australians, we adapted many of the questions for a local context. We also added additional questions to assess news media literacy training in schools and the use of Australian-made, child-focused news media. In 2020 we added a new question about the actions young people take to check the veracity and quality of news and to avoid misinformation. This question was largely adapted from the 2019 Reuters Institute Global Digital News survey as seen in the Australian report, published by University of Canberra's News and Media Research Centre (N&MRC)<sup>15</sup>. We also added new questions to support young Australians to make suggestions about how Australian news media could serve them better.

## Implementation

The online survey company we used is an established Australian online data collection agency. Unlike many online survey companies, the company we selected uses post, phone, print and online recruitment methods to build its online panel and this process is independently audited. This ensures significantly improved representation when compared with other panels that rely on only online recruitment methods and avoids the bias that may result based on demographic media practice trends. All members of the survey company team are based in Australia and all data is stored in Australia. The company is accredited with ISO 20252 and ISO 26362 Global Panel Standard.

Each initial respondent (adult) was rewarded based on whether they completed the survey or were screened out because the quota had been filled. The rewards provided can be used to redeem a shopping gift card. A survey completion was given a reward valued at approximately \$2. The small incentives provided by this company are delivered to members by post to a physical address as this has numerous data quality benefits in terms of enhanced validation of respondents.

The data we received was de-identified and on agreement the survey company removed all copies they had of the data once it was received by us.

## Data Processing

The data was screened by frequency in SPSS by the research team to identify skip-patterns and out of range values. All questions presented in a Likert scale matrix format were eyeballed to locate any patterned selection, e.g. selection in same categories across all items, or selections in a zig zag pattern. No errors or inconsistencies were found. As a result, no further panel respondents were removed from analysis for this report. In this report all figures are rounded to the nearest percentage.

Percentages shown in the report may not total 100 due to rounding.

# About the authors

**Dr Tanya Notley** investigates the social and cultural impact of communication technologies at Western Sydney University, where she is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Humanities and Communication Arts and a Senior Researcher with the Institute for Culture and Society. She collaborates with a number of media literacy and social justice organisations to design digital media initiatives. Her research examines the ways government policy, schools, parents and libraries can support young people to access and use digital technologies effectively. Tanya is the Deputy Chair of the Australian Media Literacy Alliance (AMLA).

**A/Prof Michael Dezuanni** undertakes research about digital media, literacies and learning in home, school and community contexts. He is the Associate Director of Queensland University of Technology's Digital Media Research Centre within the Creative Industries Faculty. He was the expert advisor for Media Arts to the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority during the development of the Australian Curriculum and he is an honorary life member of Australian Teachers of Media, Queensland in recognition of his contributions to the field of Media Literacy.

**Dr Hua Flora Zhong** has rich experience in managing research activities throughout the life cycle of projects, and undertaking advanced quantitative and qualitative analysis for studies in the fields of education, applied linguistics, gender studies and educational psychology. Flora has also worked on a number of large scale research projects funded by the Australian Research Council in educational and social psychology, school education, and Indigenous education. As a Senior Research Officer at the Institute for Culture and Society, Western Sydney University, Flora is responsible for providing high level research support and coordinating the day-to-day management of research activities at the Institute.

**Simon Chambers'** research background is in cultural sociology and the application of methodologies that bring together quantitative and qualitative analysis in a complementary manner. He has previously worked at ABC Radio National and Classic FM and is currently a consultant analyst at both APRA AMCOS and the Australian Music Centre. He has also worked on a range of Australian Research Council projects spanning the dynamics of Australian cultural fields, the value of music exports and the development of personalised recommendation algorithms. His recently submitted PhD examined the notion of distance in the similarity and familiarity of music.

# Appendix: Toplines

## Q4.

### How often do you do each of the following activities?

#### a. Read newspapers in print (%)

Often/Sometimes (NET)	15%
Often	2%
Sometimes	13%
Hardly ever/Never (NET)	85%
Hardly ever	28%
Never	57%

There is a statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (3, N = 2069) = 14.06, p < .01^{16}$ . Fewer young Australians selected "often" and more selected "never" in 2020 than 2017<sup>17</sup>.

#### b. Listen to news stories on the radio

Often/Sometimes (NET)	44%
Often	8%
Sometimes	36%
Hardly ever/Never (NET)	56%
Hardly ever	34%
Never	22%

There is a statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (3, N = 2069) = 10.33, p < .05$ . Fewer young Australians selected "never" in 2020 than 2017.

#### c. Watch news stories on television

Often/Sometimes (NET)	63%
Often	16%
Sometimes	47%
Hardly ever/Never (NET)	37%
Hardly ever	26%
Never	11%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (1, N = 2069) = 3.65, p = .30$ .

#### d. Get news stories from a social media network

Often/Sometimes (NET)	56%
Often	23%
Sometimes	33%
Hardly ever/Never (NET)	44%
Hardly ever	17%
Never	27%

There is a statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (3, N = 2069) = 24.24, p < .01$ . More young Australians selected "often" and fewer selected "hardly ever" in 2020 than 2017.

#### e. Get news stories from a website or mobile phone app

Often/Sometimes (NET)	51%
Often	17%
Sometimes	34%
Hardly ever/Never (NET)	49%
Hardly ever	22%
Never	27%

There is a statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (3, N = 2069) = 33.10, p < .001$ . More young Australians selected "often" and "sometimes" and fewer selected "never" in 2020 than 2017.

#### f. Hear about news stories from friends

Often/Sometimes (NET)	76%
Often	21%
Sometimes	55%
Hardly ever/Never (NET)	24%
Hardly ever	18%
Never	6%

There is a statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (3, N = 2069) = 8.28, p < .05$ . More young Australians selected "often" and fewer selected "never" in 2020 than 2017.

#### g. Hear about news stories from family

Often/Sometimes (NET)	91%
Often	38%
Sometimes	53%
Hardly ever/Never (NET)	10%
Hardly ever	8%
Never	2%

There is a statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (3, N = 2069) = 17.53, p < .01$ . More young Australians selected "often" and fewer selected "never" in 2020 than 2017.

#### h. Hear about news stories from teachers or other adults in your life

Often/Sometimes (NET)	90%
Often	31%
Sometimes	59%
Hardly ever/Never (NET)	10%
Hardly ever	8%
Never	2%

There is a statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (3, N = 2069) = 19.33, p < .001$ . Fewer young Australians selected "hardly ever" and "never" in 2020 than 2017.

## Q5.

### Do you watch/read/listen to the same news as your parent/s or guardian/s?

Often/Sometimes (NET)	71%
Often	20%
Sometimes	51%
Hardly ever/Never (NET)	29%
Hardly ever	21%
Never	8%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (3, N = 2069) = 2.10, p = .55$ .

**Q6.**

**Which of the below activities, if any, did you do yesterday?**

		Compared with 2017
<b>News from friends/family/teacher (NET)</b>		
Heard news stories from my family	54%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=31.23, p<.001$
Heard news from a teacher at school	33%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=24.83, p<.001$
Heard news stories from friends	30%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=14.49, p<.001$
<b>News Online (NET)</b>		
Got news stories from a social media network	29%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=13.12, p<.001$
Got news stories from a website or mobile phone app	19%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=9.25, p<.01$
<b>Traditional (NET)</b>		
Watched news stories on television	36%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=1.85, p=.17$
Listened to news stories on the radio	19%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=1.67, p=.20$
Read news stories in newspapers	4%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=9.90, p<.01$
None of these	12%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=20.88, p<.001$

**Q7.**

**Where would you prefer to get news stories from? Select up to 3 options.**

		Compared with 2017
<b>Friend/Family/teacher</b>		
family	50%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=2.63, p=.11$
friends	20%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=0.80, p=.37$
a teacher or other adult in my life	27%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=0.63, p=.43$
<b>Online</b>		
social media network	30%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=4.66, p<.05$
website	14%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=2.25, p=.13$
mobile phone app	13%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=6.79, p<.01$
<b>Traditional</b>		
television	38%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=17.21, p<.001$
radio	11%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=1.26, p=.26$
printed newspapers	3%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=1.47, p=.23$
I don't get news from any sources	3%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=9.04, p<.05$

**Q8.**

**How often are you in the following places when you hear or see news?**

<b>a. At home</b>	
Often/Sometimes (NET)	93%
Often	43%
Sometimes	50%
<b>Hardly ever/Never (NET)</b>	
Hardly ever	6%
Never	1%

There is a statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2(3, N = 2069) = 8.23, p < .05$ . Fewer young Australians selected "never" in 2020 than 2017.

<b>b. At school in the classroom</b>	
Often/Sometimes (NET)	71%
Often	15%
Sometimes	56%
<b>Hardly ever/Never (NET)</b>	
Hardly ever	20%
Never	9%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2(3, N = 2069) = 2.46, p = .48$ .

<b>c. At school but outside the classroom</b>	
Often/Sometimes (NET)	53%
Often	9%
Sometimes	44%
<b>Hardly ever/Never (NET)</b>	
Hardly ever	29%
Never	18%

There is a statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2(3, N = 2069) = 11.44, p < .05$ . More young Australians selected "sometimes" and fewer selected "never" in 2020 than 2017.



d. On public transport	
Often/Sometimes (NET)	23%
Often	3%
Sometimes	20%
Hardly ever/Never (NET)	77%
Hardly ever	23%
Never	54%

There is a statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (3, N = 2069) = 10.49, p < .05$ . More young Australians selected "sometimes" in 2020 than 2017.

e. In the library (school or public)	
Often/Sometimes (NET)	33%
Often	3%
Sometimes	30%
Hardly ever/Never (NET)	66%
Hardly ever	35%
Never	31%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (3, N = 2069) = 6.77, p = .08$

**Q9.**  
How often do you access news stories when you are...

a. by yourself	
Often/Sometimes (NET)	44%
Often	10%
Sometimes	34%
Hardly ever/Never (NET)	55%
Hardly ever	30%
Never	25%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (3, N = 2069) = 3.28, p = .35$ .

b. with your parent/s or guardian/s	
Often/Sometimes (NET)	77%
Often	23%
Sometimes	54%
Hardly ever/Never (NET)	22%
Hardly ever	17%
Never	5%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (3, N = 2069) = 5.61, p = .13$ .

c. with your friend/s	
Often/Sometimes (NET)	44%
Often	7%
Sometimes	37%
Hardly ever/Never (NET)	56%
Hardly ever	34%
Never	22%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (3, N = 2069) = 5.52, p = .14$ .

d. with your teacher/s at school	
Often/Sometimes (NET)	61%
Often	8%
Sometimes	53%
Hardly ever/Never (NET)	38%
Hardly ever	25%
Never	13%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (3, N = 2069) = 2.78, p = .43$ .

**Q10.**  
How much, if at all, do you trust the news stories you get from...

a. news organisations	
A lot/Some (NET)	71%
A lot	19%
Some	52%
Not too much/Not at all (NET)	26%
Not too much	19%
Not at all	7%
Preferred not to say	3%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (4, N = 2069) = 5.17, p = .27$ .

b. friends	
A lot/Some (NET)	67%
A lot	13%
Some	54%
Not too much/Not at all (NET)	31%
Not too much	27%
Not at all	4%
Preferred not to say	1%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (4, N = 2069) = 1.42, p = .84$ .

c. family	
A lot/Some (NET)	93%
A lot	57%
Some	36%
Not too much/Not at all (NET)	6%
Not too much	5%
Not at all	1%
Preferred not to say	1%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (4, N = 2069) = 3.73, p = .44$ .

d. teachers	
A lot/Some (NET)	87%
A lot	40%
Some	47%
Not too much/Not at all (NET)	12%
Not too much	10%
Not at all	2%
Preferred not to say	1%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2(4, N = 2069) = 3.44, p = .49$ .

#### Q11.

**Do you ever get news stories or news headlines on any of the social media network sites listed below?**

		Compared with 2017
YouTube	35%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=0.44, p=.51$
Instagram	32%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=77.83, p<.001$
Facebook	30%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=0.20, p=.66$
Snapchat	17%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=19.19, p<.001$
TikTok	15%	#
WhatsApp	8%	#
Twitter	7%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=3.46, p=.06$
Reddit	4%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=9.00, p<.01$
Tumblr	1%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=0.92, p=.34$
Other	1%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=2.12, p=.15$
I do not get news or news headlines on any social media network sites	33%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=12.81, p<.001$

Note: # new options for 2020.

#### Q12.

**On which of the social media sites listed below do you most prefer to get news stories or news headlines?**

Base: Young Australian who get news stories or headlines from one of the social media network sites from Q11 (N=712)

Facebook	25%
YouTube	23%
Instagram	20%
TikTok	6%
Snapchat	5%
Twitter	3%
WhatsApp	2%
Tumblr	0%
Reddit	1%
other	1%
None of these	13%

There is a statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2(10, N = 1302) = 87.78, p < .001$ . More young Australians selected "Instagram" and fewer people selected "Facebook" and "YouTube".

#### Q13.

**When you follow a link to a news story on a social media network site, how much attention, if any, do you pay to thinking about who made the news story?**

Base: Young Australian who get news stories or headlines from one of the social media network sites from Q11 (N=712)

A lot/Some attention (NET)	53%
A lot of attention	7%
Some attention	46%
Very little/No attention (NET)	46%
Very little attention	32%
No attention at all	14%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2(3, N = 1302) = 3.50, p = .32$ .

**Q14.**

**In the past six months, have you shared a news story on social media?**

Base: Young Australian who get news stories or headlines from one of the social media network sites from Q11 (N=712)

Yes	25%
No	66%
Unsure	9%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 1302) = 3.64, p = .16$ .

**Q14b.**

**When you are using the internet (including social media) and you see news stories, how often do you try to work out whether or not the news story is true?**

Often/Sometimes (NET)	59%
Often	13%
Sometimes	46%
Hardly ever/Never (NET)	41%
Hardly ever	30%
Never	11%

There is a statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (3, N = 1302) = 53.90, p < .001$ . More young Australians selected "often" and "sometimes", and fewer selected "never" in 2020 than 2017.

**Q15.**

**In the past six months, have you shared a news story with others that you later found out was wrong or untrue? (N=712)**

Yes	21%
No	54%
Unsure	25%

There is a statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (2, N = 1712) = 78.67, p < .001$ . More young Australians selected "yes", and fewer selected "no" and "unsure" in 2020 than 2017.

**Q16.**

**How often did you do any of the following activities in the past year? (N=712)**

**a. I decided I would not share a news story because I was unsure if it was true or not.**

Often/Sometimes (NET)	35%
Often	11%
Sometimes	24%
Occasionally/Never (NET)	65%
Occasionally	31%
Never	34%

**b. I checked a number of different news sources because I was worried the news story was untrue or inaccurate.**

Often/Sometimes (NET)	27%
Often	5%
Sometimes	22%
Occasionally/Never (NET)	72%
Occasionally	33%
Never	39%

**c. I changed from one news source to another because I thought it was more trustworthy.**

Often/Sometimes (NET)	25%
Often	4%
Sometimes	21%
Occasionally/Never (NET)	74%
Occasionally	27%
Never	47%

**d. I stopped using a particular news source because I was unsure about how much I could trust the reporting.**

Often/Sometimes (NET)	25%
Often	5%
Sometimes	20%
Occasionally/Never (NET)	75%
Occasionally	27%
Never	48%

**e. I discussed a news story with a person I trust because I was unsure if it was true.**

Often/Sometimes (NET)	52%
Often	14%
Sometimes	38%
Occasionally/Never (NET)	48%
Occasionally	34%
Never	14%

**f. I stopped paying attention to news shared by someone because I was unsure whether to trust that person.**

Often/Sometimes (NET)	33%
Often	6%
Sometimes	27%
Occasionally/Never (NET)	67%
Occasionally	38%
Never	29%

**Q17.**

**When you watch, read or hear about news stories, do you feel...?**

**a. angry**

Often/Sometimes (NET)	60%
Often	8%
Sometimes	52%
Hardly ever/Never (NET)	40%
Hardly ever	28%
Never	12%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (3, N = 2069) = 4.06, p = .26$ .

**b. sad or upset**

Often/Sometimes (NET)	75%
Often	12%
Sometimes	63%
Hardly ever/Never (NET)	25%
Hardly ever	19%
Never	6%

There is a statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (3, N = 2069) = 8.90, p < .05$ . More young Australians selected "often" in 2020 than 2017.

c. afraid	
Often/Sometimes (NET)	62%
Often	8%
Sometimes	54%
Hardly ever/Never (NET)	38%
Hardly ever	28%
Never	10%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2(3, N = 2069) = 6.31, p = .10$ .

d. indifferent	
Often/Sometimes (NET)	67%
Often	16%
Sometimes	51%
Hardly ever/Never (NET)	33%
Hardly ever	24%
Never	9%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2(3, N = 2069) = 2.16, p = .54$ .

e. happy or hopeful	
Often/Sometimes (NET)	68%
Often	7%
Sometimes	61%
Hardly ever/Never (NET)	33%
Hardly ever	25%
Never	8%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2(3, N = 2069) = .96, p = .81$ .

f. Motivated to act, to respond to the situation	
Often/Sometimes (NET)	54%
Often	7%
Sometimes	47%
Hardly ever/Never (NET)	45%
Hardly ever	32%
Never	13%

There is a statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2(3, N = 2069) = 10.65, p < .05$ . More young Australians selected "sometimes", and fewer people selected "never" in 2020 than 2017.

g. smart or knowledgeable	
Often/Sometimes (NET)	74%
Often	11%
Sometimes	63%
Hardly ever/Never (NET)	26%
Hardly ever	20%
Never	6%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2(3, N = 2069) = 6.84, p = .08$ .

#### Q18.

#### Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

a. The news covers issues that matter to me.	
Agree (1, 2) (NET)	45%
Strongly Agree	3%
Agree	42%
Disagree (3, 4) (NET)	34%
Disagree	27%
Strongly disagree	7%
I don't know	21%

There is a statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2(4, N = 2069) = 18.54, p < .01$ . More young Australians selected "agree", and fewer people selected "disagree" in 2020 than 2017.

b. Getting news stories is important to me.	
Agree (1, 2) (NET)	49%
Strongly Agree	6%
Agree	43%
Disagree (3, 4) (NET)	33%
Disagree	26%
Strongly disagree	7%
I don't know	18%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2(4, N = 2069) = 8.41, p = .08$ .

c. News treats people of different races and ethnic backgrounds equally fairly.	
Agree (1, 2) (NET)	38%
Strongly Agree	5%
Agree	33%
Disagree (3, 4) (NET)	36%
Disagree	29%
Strongly disagree	7%
I don't know	27%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2(4, N = 2069) = 5.15, p = .27$ .

d. News treats women and men equally fairly.	
Agree (1, 2) (NET)	39%
Strongly Agree	4%
Agree	35%
Disagree (3, 4) (NET)	33%
Disagree	25%
Strongly disagree	8%
I don't know	29%

There is a statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2(4, N = 2069) = 17.32, p < .01$ . More young Australians selected "strongly disagree", and fewer people selected "I don't know" in 2020 than 2017.

e. I know how to tell fake news stories from real news stories.	
Agree (1, 2) (NET)	36%
Strongly Agree	3%
Agree	33%
Disagree (3, 4) (NET)	34%
Disagree	28%
Strongly disagree	6%
I don't know	30%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2(4, N = 2069) = 2.51, p = .64$ .

**f. Young people often appear on the news talking about things which affect them.**

Agree (1, 2) (NET)	45%
Strongly Agree	4%
Agree	41%
Disagree (3, 4) (NET)	36%
Disagree	28%
Strongly disagree	8%
I don't know	20%

There is a statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (4, N = 2069) = 11.29, p < .05$ . More young Australians selected "agree", and fewer people selected "I don't know" in 2020 than 2017.

**g. Most news media have no idea what the lives of people my age are really like.**

Agree (1, 2) (NET)	66%
Strongly Agree	13%
Agree	53%
Disagree (3, 4) (NET)	13%
Disagree	12%
Strongly disagree	1%
I don't know	21%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (4, N = 2069) = 1.64, p = .80$ .

**h. I am able to talk about news stories that distress or upset me with my family.**

Agree (1, 2) (NET)	84%
Strongly Agree	28%
Agree	56%
Disagree (3, 4) (NET)	7%
Disagree	6%
Strongly disagree	1%
I don't know	8%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (4, N = 2069) = 8.66, p = .07$ .

**i. I am able to talk about news stories that distress or upset me with my teacher/s.**

Agree (1, 2) (NET)	61%
Strongly Agree	6%
Agree	55%
Disagree (3, 4) (NET)	22%
Disagree	18%
Strongly disagree	4%
I don't know	17%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (4, N = 2069) = 3.40, p = .49$ .

**Q19. On a scale of 1 (Not at all important) to 5 (Very important), how important is it for you hear about the following topics?**

**a. News about crime and violence**

Scale 1/2 (NET)	32%
1 (Not at all important)	11%
2	21%
Scale 3	33%
Scale 4/5 (NET)	34%
4	23%
5 (Very important)	11%

There is a statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (4, N = 2069) = 10.77, p < .05$ . More young Australians selected Scale 4, and fewer people selected Scale 1 ("not at all important") in 2020 than 2017.

**b. News about health issues involving doctors and medicine**

Scale 1/2 (NET)	24%
1 (Not at all important)	9%
2	15%
Scale 3	33%
Scale 4/5 (NET)	43%
4	26%
5 (Very important)	17%

There is a statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (4, N = 2069) = 28.47, p < .001$ . More young Australians selected Scale 5 ("very important"), and fewer people selected Scale 2 and Scale 1 ("not at all important") in 2020 than 2017.

**c. News about the economy and employment issues**

Scale 1/2 (NET)	49%
1 (Not at all important)	24%
2	25%
Scale 3	30%
Scale 4/5 (NET)	21%
4	16%
5 (Very important)	5%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (4, N = 2069) = 3.39, p = .49$ .

**d. News about education and schools**

Scale 1/2 (NET)	21%
1 (Not at all important)	8%
2	13%
Scale 3	33%
Scale 4/5 (NET)	46%
4	30%
5 (Very important)	16%

There is a statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (4, N = 2069) = 14.26, p < .01$ . More young Australians selected Scale 2, and fewer people selected Scale 1 ("not at all important") in 2020 than 2017.

**e. News about events and issues in your local community**

Scale 1/2 (NET)	20%
1 (Not at all important)	7%
2	13%
Scale 3	32%
Scale 4/5 (NET)	49%
4	32%
5 (Very important)	17%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2 (4, N = 2069) = 6.55, p = .16$ .

f. News about celebrities and entertainment		
Scale	1/2 (NET)	44%
	1 (Not at all important)	23%
	2	21%
Scale	3	30%
Scale	4/5 (NET)	27%
	4	20%
	5 (Very important)	7%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2(4, N = 2069) = 3.26, p = .52$ .

g. News about technology		
Scale	1/2 (NET)	17%
	1 (Not at all important)	6%
	2	11%
Scale	3	32%
Scale	4/5 (NET)	50%
	4	31%
	5 (Very important)	19%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2(4, N = 2069) = 1.86, p = .76$ .

h. News about sport		
Scale	1/2 (NET)	38%
	1 (Not at all important)	20%
	2	18%
Scale	3	26%
Scale	4/5 (NET)	36%
	4	20%
	5 (Very important)	16%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2(4, N = 2069) = 0.66, p = .96$ .

i. News about politics including what happens in Parliament		
Scale	1/2 (NET)	59%
	1 (Not at all important)	32%
	2	27%
Scale	3	26%
Scale	4/5 (NET)	15%
	4	11%
	5 (Very important)	4%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2(4, N = 2069) = 6.89, p = .14$ .

j. News about accidents		
Scale	1/2 (NET)	35%
	1 (Not at all important)	13%
	2	22%
Scale	3	36%
Scale	4/5 (NET)	30%
	4	22%
	5 (Very important)	8%

Note: new option for 2020.

k. News about environment and climate change		
Scale	1/2 (NET)	19%
	1 (Not at all important)	8%
	2	11%
Scale	3	31%
Scale	4/5 (NET)	50%
	4	27%
	5 (Very important)	23%

Note: new option for 2020.

**Q20. Do you think young people need news media that is made especially for them?**

Yes	53%
No	15%
Unsure	32%

There is a statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2(2, N = 2069) = 16.01, p < .001$ . More young Australians selected "yes" and fewer people selected "no" in 2020 than 2017.

**Q21. Do you ever get news stories or news headlines on any of the social media network sites listed below?**

	Compared with 2017	
Behind the News (BTN)	22%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=3.34, p=.07$
The Project	14%	#
School newspaper	11%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=2.91, p=.09$
Buzzfeed	8%	#
A YouTuber	6%	#
KidsNews	5%	#
JJJ Hack	3%	#
Pedestrian T. V.	2%	#
Other	1%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=3.01, p=.08$
Do not use regularly	48%	$\chi^2(1, N=2069)=12.69, p<.001$

Note: # new options for 2020.

**Q21. In the past year, have you had any lessons at school to help you decide whether news stories are true and can be trusted?**

Yes	20%
No	57%
Unsure	24%

There is no statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2(2, N = 2069) = 1.93, p = .38$ .

**Q22.**

**In the past year, have you had any lessons at school to help create your own news stories?**

Yes	28%
No	58%
Unsure	14%

There is a statistically significant difference when compared with 2017,  $\chi^2(2, N = 2069) = 10.79, p < .01$ . More young Australians selected "no", and fewer people selected "yes" in 2020 than 2017.

1. Notley, T, Dezuanni, M, Zhong, HF 2019, *The inclusion and representation of young people in the Australian news media*, Research report, Western Sydney University and Queensland University of Technology. <https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/medialiteracy/research/snapshot>
2. Dezuanni, M., Notley, T. & Corser, K. 2020. News and Australian Teachers: How news media literacy is taught in the classroom. Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology and Western Sydney University.
3. For example, the News Champions Forum at the Museum of Australian Democracy we organised with the Museum of Australian Democracy (MoAD) included 21 passionate news advocates from around the country. See [https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/medialiteracy/about/news\\_champions\\_forum](https://www.westernsydney.edu.au/medialiteracy/about/news_champions_forum)
4. Graham, T, and Keller, T. (2020). Bushfires, bots and arson claims: Australia flung in the global disinformation spotlight. *The Conversation*, January 10. <https://theconversation.com/bushfires-bots-and-arson-claims-australia-flung-in-the-global-disinformation-spotlight-129556> and Bruns, A., Angus, D., Graham, T., and Keller, T. (2020) When a virus goes viral: pros and cons th the coronavirus spread on social media. *The Conversation*. March 18. <https://theconversation.com/when-a-virus-goes-viral-pros-and-cons-to-the-coronavirus-spread-on-social-media-133525>
5. For example, the ABC's daily Coronacast focused on news and information about COVID-19. It included one podcast episodes that responded to questions from children. Nine News Sydney produced a special Coronavirus Explainer for Kids.
6. Samios, Z. (2020) Buzzfeed to close Australian, UK news operations. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. May 14. <https://www.smh.com.au/business/companies/buzzfeed-to-close-australia-uk-news-operations-20200514-p54srs.html>
7. Meade, A. (2020) More than 150 Australian newsroom shut since January 2019 as Covid-19 deepens media crisis. *The Guardian Australian Edition*. 18 May. <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2020/may/18/more-than-150-australian-newsrooms-shut-since-january-2019-as-covid-19-deepens-media-crisis>
8. In this report the word "significant" is used exclusively in this report to refer to statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) changes. Complete results of our comparison with 2017 survey data (using Pearson Chi-square test) can be found in the Appendix.
9. No statistical comparison between 2017 and 2020 was carried out for WhatsApp and TikTok because these were new options added for 2020.
10. We defined fake news to the respondents as "false information that is presented as true and accurate news."
11. In 2017 we asked this question to all respondents. In 2020 we only asked those who use social media given this is the most likely environment they will encounter fake news from an unknown source. To compare the data we examined the results of this question in 2017 for the young Australians who also use at least one social media site ( $n=590$ ) instead of the full sample ( $n=1000$ ). Among the subgroup of young Australians ( $n=590$ ) in 2017, there are 13% young people often try to work out if news stories are true; 46% stated sometimes, 29% stated they hardly ever do this and 12% stated they never do it.
12. This question has been adapted from a question included in the 2019 Reuters Institute Global Digital News survey as seen in the Australian report. See <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2019-06/apo-nid240786.pdf>
13. We did not include Squiz Kids in this survey since it was launched only one month before the survey data was collected.
14. See <https://www.commonssensemedia.org/about-us/news/press-releases/new-survey-reveals-teens-get-their-news-from-social-media-and-youtube>
15. Fisher et al (2019). *Digital News Report: Australia 2019*. News and Media Research Center, University of Canberra.
16. The level of statistical significance is often expressed as a p-value. A p value less than 0.05 ( $p < .05$ ) is statistically significant. It indicates that there is less than a 5% probability (1% if  $p < .01$ ) that the null hypothesis is correct (that is, that there is no difference between young Australian's responses between 2017 and 2020). Therefore, we can accept the alternative hypothesis (that there is a difference between responses between 2017 and 2020).
17. This comparison is done through a two proportion z-test which is used to compare two proportions to see if they are the same.

