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Co-operation in Europe
Mission to Serbia



REPORT ON DIGITAL NEWS in Serbia

NDN
VOJVODINE



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All terms used in the text in the masculine grammatical gender include both the masculine and feminine genders of the persons to whom they refer.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD.....	4
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS.....	6
SOCIAL AND RESEARCH CONTEXT	8
Social context	8
Research context.....	10
METHODOLOGY.....	12
RESULTS	14
ATTITUDES TOWARDS NEWS	15
MEDIA USE.....	18
Use of traditional media.....	20
Online news brands	21
Beyond mainstream news	22
TRUST IN MEDIA	24
Political and commercial influence	26
MISINFORMATION	30
DIGITAL WORLD ECONOMICS	31
ACCESS TO ONLINE NEWS.....	33
Media formats in digital environment	34
Text vs. video form.....	35
SOCIAL NETWORKS, NEWS CONSUMPTION, AND JOURNALISM	36
Journalists and social networks.....	39
MEDIA TOPIC: WAR IN UKRAINE	40
MEDIA TOPIC: CLIMATE CHANGE	42
ABOUT THE AUTHORS	44

FOREWORD

The relevance of media organizations as news providers has become questionable in the time when the number of protagonists in public communication has multiplied, and the structures used to access information have become more complex. It is no revelation that digital platforms, especially social networks, create new opportunities, as well as obstacles for media outlets. The extent to which changes in this sphere can shake the public and the work of media outlets is evident in the most recent example – the way Twitter has been changing since Elon Musk took over in 2022. Musk himself, Twitter influencers, politicians, athletes, actors, conspiracy theorists, as well as a plethora of fake accounts, are all indicative of how wide the range of those who take part in creating, placing, sharing, and ranking information is. The transition of traditional media into the digital environment cannot be seen merely as adapting to digital channels but rather as a process that has broader social and political implications.

In order to better understand the changes in news consumption, in 2012 the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (hereinafter: Reuters Institute) started a study called Digital News Report. What started ten years ago as a comparative study of five countries (UK, USA, Germany, France and Denmark) is today a report that presents data about 46 countries from all continents. The data from the research show that digital news is becoming the main gateway to news and participation in the public sphere. It follows the rise of certain social networks in western countries and their further spreading across other countries. It also looks into the appearance of new media formats and the audience's attitude toward them.

Overall, the annual reports of the Reuters Institute show that the trends appear and disappear non-linearly. Until ten years ago, it seemed that audio forms would become a marginal segment of the consumed content, only for podcasts to become the favorite source of information, education, and entertainment a few years later. Short video clips, as a reaction to the audience's shift towards TikTok and Instagram, today seem like the main gateway to engaging

young audiences. However, large international outlets are registering increased interest in longer documentary forms at the same time. As opposed to short snippets of news on social networks, the old newsletter format is today being embraced by media companies, and they are testing if a weekly dose of longer content is a solution to some challenges imposed by digital information. This pathway, full of oscillations, should be considered when reading this report and predicting trends based on it.

In Serbia, such topics are mainly in the background, while the focus is primarily on the part of research dealing with media freedoms, as well as media politicization and polarization. The data we obtained indicate that a great majority of people believe politics has supremacy over media. Concerns that media are not independent, that they do not do their job professionally and that they do not fulfil their social functions lead to prominent distrust in media. International and domestic events, such as the war in Ukraine, opposition parties re-entering the National Assembly, the aggravation of the economic situation, and the re-emergence of Kosovo¹ as a burning issue, have all made people turn to media and follow them intensively. However, many of them are trying to cut down on news to avoid negative mood and exhaustion that comes with following current events. Therefore, the path towards quality information includes changes that would not only bring new forms and formats or distribution channels, but also a wider range of structural changes in the media sphere.

The research presented here was done using the methodology of the Digital News Report 2022 conducted by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University in Oxford. It would not have been possible had the OSCE Mission to Serbia not recognized its importance and supported the research. We would hereby like to thank them for the opportunity they gave us. We would also like to extend our gratitude to the Reuters Institute for making its methodology available and to Nic Newman, research associate,

who had answers to our numerous questions. It was our pleasure to cooperate with the Kantar Serbia – TMG Insights agency, which conducted the research professionally and, thus, helped us obtain quality findings. We would also like to thank Ljiljana Breberina from the OSCE Mission to Serbia, Dr. Stefan Janjić from the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad, and Zoran Strika from *Radio 021*, who were the first readers of the study.

¹ All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

- The citizens of Serbia follow the news intensively – over 90% of respondents consume news at least once a day, while most of them (66%) do it more than once.
- The greatest interest is expressed in local news (64%) and international news (63%), followed by politics (54%) and health-related news (52%).
- Selective news avoidance is a common practice. With 65% of citizens trying to avoid news often or sometimes, Serbia is the leader among the countries included in the global report. The main reasons for this practice in Serbia are the negative impact of news on people's mood, too much news about politics and the COVID pandemic, and the sheer amount of news.
- In terms of frequency of their use, social networks (83%) surpass TV news (72%) as the news source. However, when the respondents choose their main source of information, TV (34%) takes supremacy over social networks (25%), as well as daily newspapers' websites and applications (22%). There are prominent generational differences: for more than 40% of young citizens (aged 18–34) social networks are the main news source, while the oldest category (55+) still relies on TV as the most important source of information (52%).
- Social networks are used intensively, 95% of respondents used them for some purpose at least on a weekly basis, with three dominating networks used by more than 70% of respondents – Viber (75%), YouTube (72%), and Facebook (71%).
- The citizens of Serbia use social networks as sources of news (83%) more than any other citizens in Europe included in the global study, which is reflected in the findings related to individual platforms. More than a half (55%) use Facebook to follow news, fewer than a half of that number use Instagram (27%) and YouTube (26%), with Viber (17%) being more popular than Twitter (13%). Although there are differences between social networks, the respondents generally believe that the

amount of news they receive through them is quite sufficient.

- News does not enjoy trust on the part of the respondents, with only 29% stating that most news can be trusted. Fewer than a half (43%) do not trust the news they themselves use. The news on social networks is not trusted either (28%).
- The media brand whose news is most trusted is N1 (39%). There is also a relatively high degree of trust in public service media – RTS (37%) and RTV (29%). The least trusted are the media characterized by their tabloid-style editorial policy (*Informer, Alo, Kurir, Pink*).
- The citizens are extremely concerned about the truthfulness of the news on the Internet (62%). Many people (85%) have encountered fake and deceiving information, mostly related to politics and the war in Ukraine.
- Regarding the way in which their personal data is used, the respondents trust news sites (25%) and social networks (25%) less than online shops (35%).
- A very small share of the respondents believe that the media are politically (14%) and economically (16%) independent. Such findings place Serbia at the bottom of the list of European countries, because only in Italy (13%), Spain (8%), and Greece (8%) less people believe that their respective media outlets are independent from political influence.
- There is a prevailing belief that media do not work in the interest of public, but that they put their commercial interests and political attitudes ahead of what is best for society. Three quarters of the respondents believe that is the case with all or most media outlets. Such an extreme attitude regarding a lack of care among media for what is best for society is not shared by any of the 46 countries in the research conducted by the Reuters Institute.
- Only 5% of the respondents have paid for news in some way last year, which is the lowest percentage among all European countries included in the global report. The willingness to pay for any digital service is low, with just over a half (55%) of them being ready to pay for such a service.
- Smartphones are the main device for accessing news for more than two thirds of the citizens of Serbia.
- Newsletters are used as a news source by a very small number of citizens (8%), but podcasts are popular and used by almost a half of the respondents (49%).
- The respondents mainly follow news in the form of a text (70%), while video news is preferred by 6% of them, with 17% of the respondents following online news in both text and video. Among the youngest audience, the largest number of respondents follow video news.
- Regarding the reporting on the war in Ukraine, the citizens of Serbia evaluate the work of their media outlets much more critically than citizens of other countries. Just under a third of the respondents believe that the media are doing a good job keeping them up to date with the war in Ukraine (32%), explaining the wider implications (28%), as well as providing a range of different perspectives (27%).
- The respondents believe that climate change is a serious problem, but they follow the related news sporadically. The main news source regarding climate change are scientists and experts (55%), followed by TV and documentary films (47%). More than a half of the respondents believe that media should support the fight against climate change.

SOCIAL AND RESEARCH CONTEXT

SOCIAL CONTEXT

The year in which this research was conducted was marked in Serbia, as well as in the rest of Europe, by the war in Ukraine that began on February 24, 2022. Serbia expressed principled support to the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. It did not, however, join the sanctions on Russia imposed by the European Union and other countries. European leaders, EU institutions and the European Parliament (EP) have called on Serbia to join the sanctions against Russia, while the EP adopted a resolution that asked for any progress in the accession negotiations to be conditioned by Serbia's introduction of sanctions.

Apart from Serbia's attitude regarding foreign policy, the economic and social consequences of the war were also reflected in the daily life of citizens. The conflict has disrupted global supply chains, primarily those of food and energy, thus opening the door for inflation. The economic consequences of the crisis caused by the war in Ukraine are also visible in Serbia, with a rising inflation rate and decreasing purchasing power.

The second half of the year was marked by tensions in northern Kosovo, which occurred after the dialogue in Brussels had been stagnant for a long time. The status of Kosovo and the position of the Serbs in that territory maintained a high ranking when it comes to political and media-related agenda. The President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, and the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Albin Kurti, continued their negotiations in Brussels under the mediation of the EU, but without much progress. At the end of August, an agreement was reached regarding personal documents, allowing citizens to travel from Kosovo to Serbia and vice versa with their ID cards.

However, the end of the year saw new tensions rise. In October, the Government of Kosovo decided, among other things, to introduce fines for owners of cars with Serbian number plates that have not been re-registered within the Kosovo system. On 5 November, the representatives of Serbs from northern Kosovo

left their positions in Kosovo institutions as a sign of protest. Arrests and barricades on the roads marked the following month as a culmination of previous events.

The political life in Serbia in 2022 was marked by presidential, parliamentary, and local elections in Belgrade on April 3. Even though the outcome of these elections was not a change of the political parties in power, the return of opposition parties to the National Assembly after a two-year boycott of public institutions brought some new dynamics into the political life.

The Serbian Progressive Party managed to keep a majority in the National Assembly, together with the Socialist Party of Serbia, while their presidential candidate Aleksandar Vučić was re-elected in the first electoral round with 58,59% of the vote. The new composition of the National Assembly includes the United for the Victory of Serbia coalition, led by the Party of Freedom and Justice, the green-left coalition “Moramo” (*We Must*), as well as three lists from the right-wing spectrum, coalitions “Nada” (*Hope*), Dveri and the Serbian Party “Zavetnici” (*Oathtakers*). Despite there being a strong majority, it was not before the end of October, six months after the elections, that the new Serbian government was formed and sworn in on 26 October.

The greatest political struggle took place in Belgrade, where the final results were announced after one month. The Serbian Progressive Party won by a small margin, provided by its coalition with the Socialist Party of Serbia. The runner-up at the Belgrade elections, just like at the National Assembly elections, was the opposition coalition around the Party of Freedom and Justice.

The media scene remained deeply polarized, without effective independent regulatory institutions and with frequent attacks on journalists. On the World Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders, Serbia’s ranking has fluctuated over the past decade.² A database of attacks on journalists kept by the Independent Journalists’ Association of Serbia records 116 attacks this year, nine of which

have been physical assaults.³ Overall, Serbia is regarded as “flawed democracy”, ranked in the 68th place on the 2022 Democracy Index.⁴

The media market seemed unaffected following the pandemic. Several news channels on cable networks have appeared over the past several years, along with some daily newspapers. Among them, the most prominent are *Euronews*, *Tanjug*, *Kurir*, *Nova S*, and *Blic TV*. At the beginning of 2021, the international media group United Media bought the *Danas* daily, and in the middle of the same year published the *Nova* daily. The latest change regarding print media occurred while this research was being conducted, when *Objektiv* stopped being published at the end of October 2022.

In 2022, the Regulatory Authority for Electronic Media (REM) invited applications for broadcast licenses on national frequencies. The TV channels belonging to the United Media Group, *N1* and *Nova S*, were among the applicants. The national TV frequencies were awarded to TV channels *Pink*, *B92*, *Prva*, and *Happy*, while a new competition was organized for the fifth one. Such an outcome was met with negative reactions from civil society, academic community, as well as international media organizations.⁵ The Slavko Ćuruvija Foundation and the Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability (CRTA) pressed charges against REM for neglecting reports that the selected TV channels had failed to obey the provisions of their own proposals and that they had been issued a number of penalties for breaching various legal provisions.⁶

At the end of 2022, Serbia was one of the few countries in Europe, which allows access to all global media, including those from Russia. Apart from the *Sputnik* portal, which was already part of the media offer, from mid-November, Serbia

2 Reporters Without Borders, World Press Freedom Index by year: <https://rsf.org/en/index>

3 Independent Journalists’ Association of Serbia, Database of attacks on journalists. bit.ly/3YJlcwV

4 Economist Intelligence Unit, Democracy Index 2022. bit.ly/3Kl95zj

5 N1, “International media organizations: REM to re-examine the decision on awarding frequencies.” 08.08.2022 bit.ly/3FU7PBi

6 Administrative court dismissed charges of two organizations and they filed a complaint.

CRTA, “Slavko Ćuruvija Foundation and CRTA sue REM.” 30.08.2022 bit.ly/3YTHlc2

had the *RT Balkan* portal by *Russia Today*,⁷ and there are announcements of a cable TV program being introduced.

The dynamic changes in the media market were followed by stagnation in legislation. The Strategy for the Development of the Public Information System 2020–2025 (Media Strategy 2020–2025) was adopted in early 2020, and by the end of the same year the government adopted the Action Plan for its implementation. However, the strategic choices are still not incorporated into media legislation. The new government saw the formation of the new Ministry of Information and Telecommunication, which formed working groups that have regularly met since November 2022 to change specific media laws.

RESEARCH CONTEXT

Public communication is caught within the spiral of technological and socio-political changes that alter the access to media, choice of channels and brands, as well as attitudes towards news. Technological changes, such as widening the use of social networks, algorithmization of news, and emergence of new formats or technologies in outlets, uniform the global trends in public communication and journalists' practice. However, depending on the socio-political context, the technologies that give power to people and facilitate interaction between outlets and readers, viewers, and listeners can be technologies of misinformation, polarization, harassment, and even repression.

It is exactly these complex relations between technology and society, but focused on media and news consumers, that the annual reports of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, University in Oxford, deal with.⁸ For global media organizations, the Digital News Report is a valuable source of information that is taken into account when plans and strategies are devised. For researchers, the Report is one of the leading sources of longitudinal comparative monitoring

of the audience. For each of the 46 countries included in the research, its respective national report is a framework and foundation for further analyses, which are conducted to shed more light and provide better insight.

Unfortunately, Serbia is not among the countries where this research is conducted regularly. Due to the efforts made by prof. Snježana Milivojević and a team of researchers at the Centre for Media Research of the Faculty of Political Science, the first research using the Reuters Institute's model was conducted in Serbia in 2020.⁹ This valuable research showed that a large portion of citizens received news in the digital form but that there were differences in several parameters between the generations inclined towards digital technologies and those who followed media in the traditional way.

A repeated round of research, whose results we present here, is only partly comparable with the research conducted two years ago. The research by the Faculty of Political Science was conducted in the year when the COVID pandemic broke out, when changes to our everyday life and switch to remote working and distance learning probably modified media-related habits of the citizens of Serbia. Additionally, the methodology used by the global study has also been changed, so it now includes all citizens, regardless of how often they use the Internet and follow the news, which was not the case in 2020. Our research team chose the comparability of the findings with the current global data over the local findings from two years ago.

Besides the aforementioned research, Serbia has been experiencing a chronic lack of research on audiences. Both the Strategy for the Development of the Public Information System¹⁰ and scientific papers¹¹ draw attention to the fact that very little is publicly known about the citizens as users and consumers of news. There is a particularly prominent lack of research that

7 Sputnik Srbija, "RT in Serbian started." 15.11.2022 bit.ly/3FW5ypf

8 Newman, Nic, Richard Fletcher, Craig T. Robertson, Kirsten Eddy, & Rasmus Kleis Nielsen. Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2022. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2022. bit.ly/3PXy4W

9 Milivojević, Snježana, Danka Ninković Slavnić, & Snežana Bajčeta. Information in the digital environment in Serbia. Beograd: Faculty of Political Studies, 2020. bit.ly/3PV5qe7

10 2020–2025 Strategy for the Development of the Public Information System, "Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia" 11/2020.

11 Ninković Slavnić, Danka. "Online audience from the perspective of the national scientific community: overview of published papers." *Sociologija*, 61:4 (2019), 497–512.

would go beyond the currently available data regarding ratings and shares, views, and clicks, and which would enable us to analyze news consumption in wider social frameworks. Having said that, this research should be understood as an endeavor to offer a current and relevant insight into the perception and practice of news usage in Serbia.

METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted using the model and questionnaire employed by the Reuters Institute, University in Oxford, for the global study “Digital News Report”. The basic questionnaire from 2022 was used, with some questions added from previous years, and the questionnaire from its supplementary research regarding the war in Ukraine.

The questionnaire was translated into Serbian and adapted to the Serbian media scene regarding media brands. When such adaptations were made, various sets of data were used regarding media use, ratings, and shares, collected from scientific research and marketing agencies to offer the respondents a relatively manageable list of 27 media outlets, including print media, radio, and TV stations.

The research aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the attitude of citizens toward news, especially in the digital environment. That is why the questionnaire included numerous fields, such as the attitude toward news, utilization of various types of news, media, brands, and social networks, trust in media, attitudes towards political and economic influences, misinformation, and various digital formats. Following in the footsteps of the 2022 Reuters Institute’s report, we also looked into how citizens inform themselves about climate change and the war in Ukraine.

The Kantar Serbia – TMG Insights agency conducted the research using the computer assisted web interview (CAWI) method. The sample included 2,027 respondents selected from online panel, who completed the survey individually between October 21 and November 2, 2022. The average time needed to complete the survey was 25 minutes.

The research included the quota sampling method, which represents the adult population of Serbia and reflects the key socio-demographic categories according to the latest estimates of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (2021). The respondents were selected to meet the set demographic criteria in terms of sex, age, and region. The response rate was 68%. The collected data were weighted according to sex, age, and region.

SAMPLE

SEX	%
Men	48
Women	52

AGE	%
18-24	9
25-34	15
35-44	17
45-54	16
55+	42

REGION	%
Belgrade	24
Vojvodina	27
Central and Western Serbia	27
Southern and Eastern Serbia	22

SETTLEMENT TYPE	%
Urban	78
Rural	22

LEVEL OF EDUCATION	%
Elementary	4
Secondary	48
Higher	47

Since 2021, the sample of the Digital News Report has also included those who do not follow the news, which is also what was applied in this research. This decision was justified because, as the findings show, only 0.6% of the respondents in Serbia never follow the news. We should also bear in mind that the survey was administered over the Internet, which means that all respondents used this technology, at least at the very basic level. According to the latest data from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia for 2021, 81% of citizens used the Internet, while 95% used mobile phone. Consequently, the data presented in this report better reflect the habits and allegiances of the Internet users than the whole population.

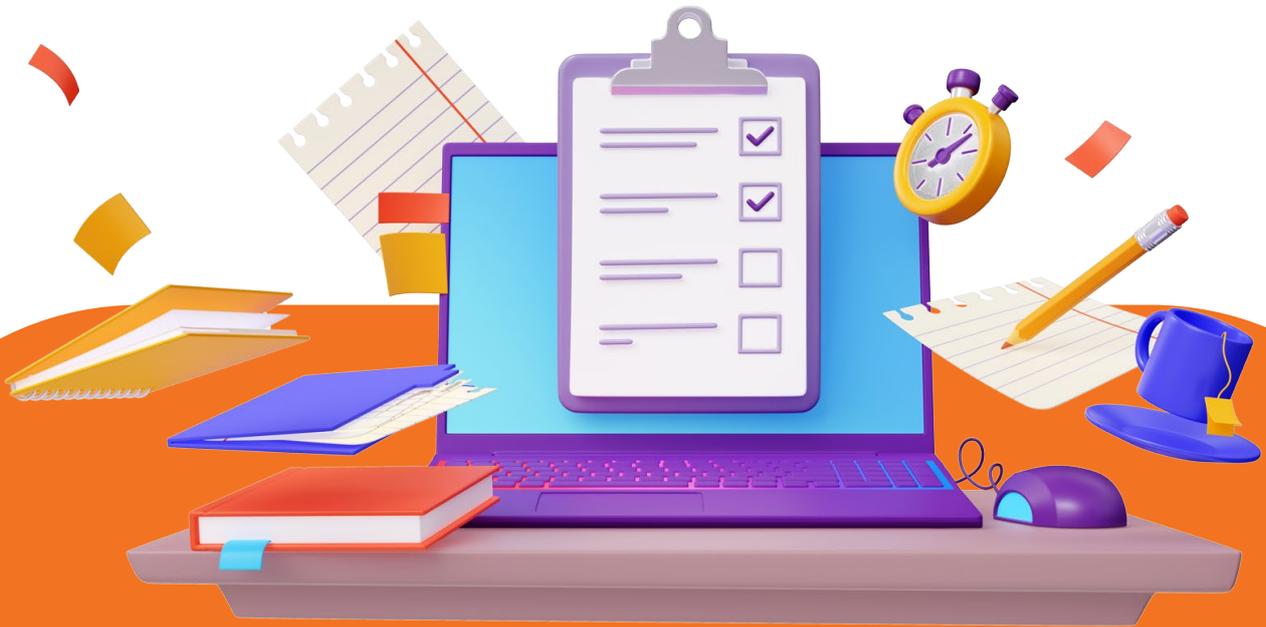
The results are presented in percentages, and sometimes their sum is not 100. This happens when the respondents were allowed to choose more than one answer. Unless stated otherwise,

the tables and graphs show all respondents' answers. The authors selected several countries with which they compared the results for Serbia. The United States of America and the United Kingdom were selected because they boast technologically advanced media industries, which set trends globally. Apart from them, two neighbouring countries, Croatia and Hungary, were also selected. When this report refers to the global average, it refers to the average of the 46 countries included in the "Digital News Report 2022".¹²

The data collected in the survey have their limitations. They are based on the perception and respondents' recollections, and can be biased as such. They will probably not correspond closely to the data available to media organizations and findings obtained using other methods, through web analytics or social network analytics.

12 Newman, Nic, Richard Fletcher, Craig T. Robertson, Kirsten Eddy, & Rasmus Kleis Nielsen. *Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2022*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2022. bit.ly/3PXY4W

RESULTS

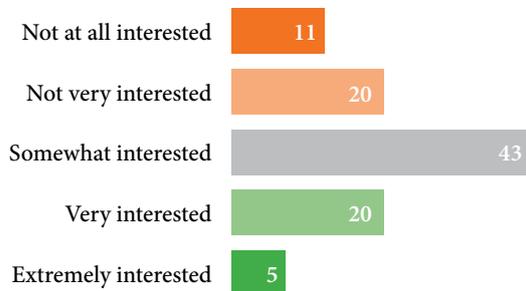


ATTITUDES TOWARDS NEWS

The attitude of an individual towards news plays a role of a link between using a certain type of media and media brand, on the one hand, and political preferences, on the other. It is a relatively stable combination of viewpoints, which can explain the differences in media use. That is why, along with the socio-demographic data about the respondents, we also list three other dimensions important for further interpretation of data.

Firstly, since news usage is one of the main components of political information and socialization, it is necessary to understand how great the interest in politics is. Among the respondents, most of them are somewhat interested (43%). Just under a third are uninterested, 20% are not very interested and 11% not at all interested in politics. On the other hand, there is a quarter of respondents who are interested, 20% very interested, while only 5% are extremely interested in politics.

INTEREST IN POLITICS



Q: How interested, if at all, would you say you are?

Next, as the second dimension, we can take the ideological orientation, which plays an important role in understanding media use in many countries included in the global study of the Reuters Institute. The respondents in Serbia mostly see themselves as belonging to the centre, followed by moderately left and moderately right ideological positions. At the ends of this scale, there is a small number of citizens who see themselves as belonging to the extreme left or extreme right. There is also a relatively high number of respondents who cannot or do not want to position themselves on the ideological scale.

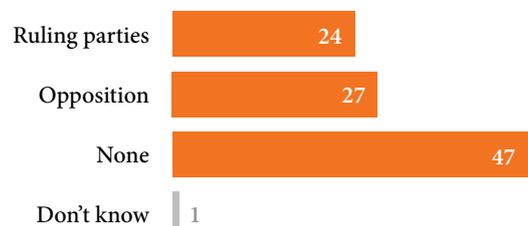
IDEOLOGICAL ORIENTATION OF RESPONDENTS



Q: Some people talk about 'left', 'right' and 'centre' to describe parties and politicians. With this in mind, where would you place yourself on the following scale?

In order to understand the media habits of the citizens of Serbia, it is necessary to take into account a third dimension – political preferences of citizens. Unlike other countries, where ideological divisions are somewhat more stable and party (and media) profiles are less ambiguous, it is equally important to understand the position of citizens of Serbia in relation to the governing and opposition parties alike. Among the respondents, the most numerous were those who did not feel close to either the governing or opposition parties (47%). Approximately the same number of respondents said they were closer to the opposition parties (27%) and those who were inclined towards the governing parties (24%).

POLITICAL PREFERENCES



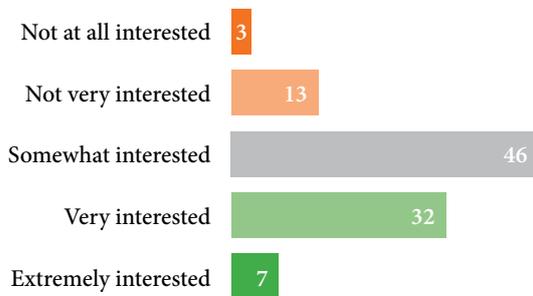
Q: Which parties are closer to your preferences, ruling parties or opposition parties?

Although they do not always have the same interest in news, the citizens of Serbia say that they follow it regularly. Two thirds of the respondents (66%) consume news several times a day, 23% do

it once a day, while 7% do it several times a week. Only 1% of citizens said they followed news once a week and the same percentage said they did it less often than once a week or once a month.

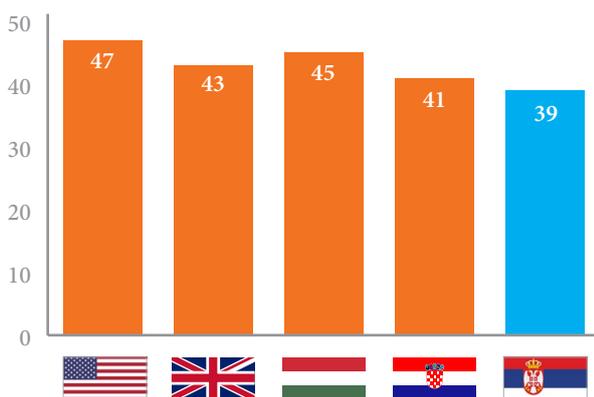
Most citizens are moderately interested in news, while almost a third are very interested. With 39% of respondents being very or extremely interested in news, Serbia is below the average of 51%, recorded for 46 countries by the Reuters Institute study. There is a trend of lower interest in news in many countries, and in the four countries selected for comparative analysis, the percentage of those interested in news is not much higher than in Serbia.

INTEREST IN NEWS



Q: How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news?

INTEREST IN NEWS - SELECTED MARKETS



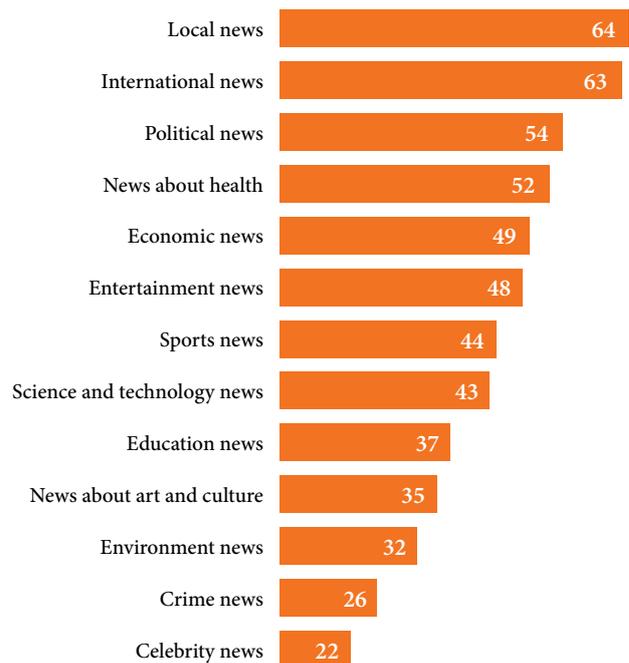
Q: How interested, if at all, would you say you are in news?

There are significant gender differences in terms of interest in news, with 47% of men saying they were interested in news and 30% of women making the same claim. The differences are also visible in the context of political preferences– the

greatest interest in news is among those closer to the governing parties (51%), followed by those close to the opposition parties (45%), while, expectedly, the least interested are those who are not close to either the governing or opposition parties (29%).

The respondents are mainly interested in local and international news, followed by political and health-related news. Such results suggest that the immediate surrounding is in the focus of citizens, but also that current events, such as the war in Ukraine and the pandemic, probably impact such attitudes. The lowest number of respondents stated they were interested in the news about the lives of celebrities and local crime news, which might indicate that those are socially less acceptable interests.

INTEREST IN NEWS - BY TOPIC

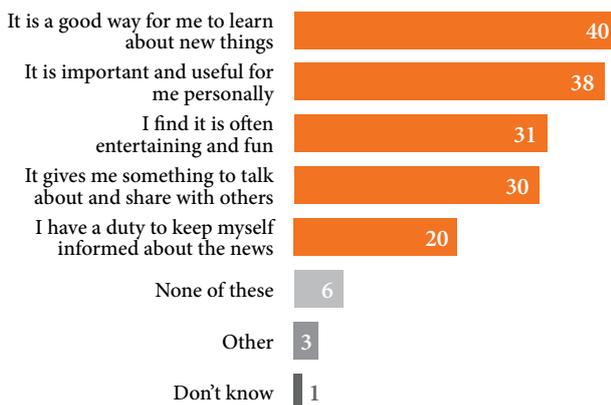


Q: Which of the following types of news, if any, are you interested in?
Base: Respondents who are interested in news, N=1,704

Audiences keep up with the news for various reasons, but the citizens of Serbia most often state educational needs as the main one. It is followed by the need to monitor the surroundings (informational function), need for entertainment (escapist function) and need for socializing (social

function). The feeling of civic duty motivates the lowest number of respondents, which suggests that news consumption is not seen in a wider context of political culture.

MOTIVATION FOR KEEPING UP WITH THE NEWS

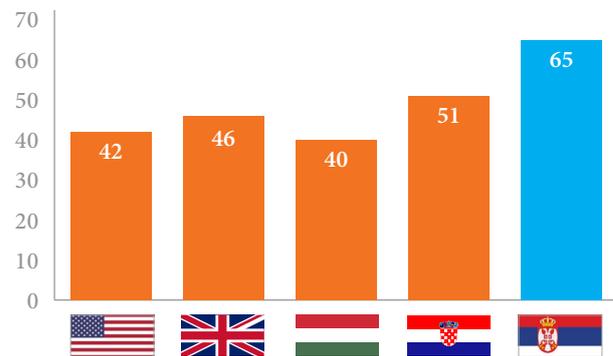


Q: Which, if any, are the most important reasons for you, personally, to keep up with the news?

Selective news avoidance is a phenomenon that the global research of the Reuters Institute recorded in many countries and it is very prominent among the citizens of Serbia. One fifth of the respondents (20%) often avoid news on purpose, slightly less than a half (45%) do it sometimes, 23% occasionally, while 11% of the respondents never do it.

With 65% of the respondents who often or sometimes avoid news, Serbia is the leader among 46 countries included in the global study. A large share of citizens who avoid news on purpose was noted in Brazil (54%), Bulgaria (58%), Turkey (56%) and Croatia (51%), while this practice is less common in Japan (14%), Finland (20%), Denmark (20%) and Norway (28%). This overview shows that news is not selectively avoided in countries where there is a dominantly positive perception of media, while avoidance is obviously a consequence of a number of factors that differ from one country to another.

NEWS AVOIDANCE - SELECTED MARKETS



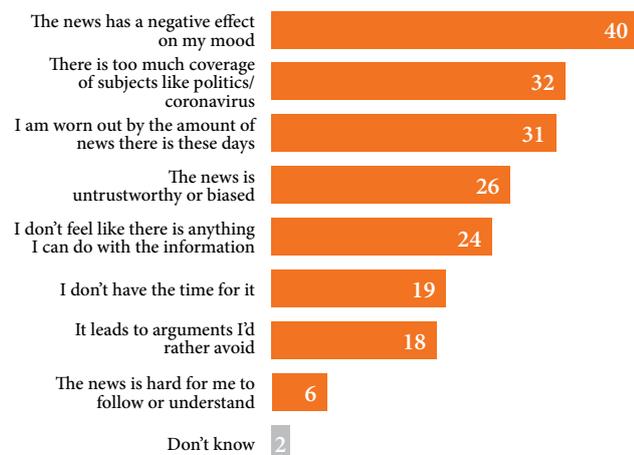
Q: Do you find yourself actively trying to avoid news these days?

In Serbia, news is more often avoided by women (72%) than men (57%), and this practice is more frequent among those with secondary (64%) and higher education (68%) than among those with primary education (58%). The respondents who said they were closer to the governing parties (48%) avoid news less frequently than those who favour the opposition parties (73%) and those close to neither the governing, nor opposition parties (70%).

As the main reasons for avoiding news, the citizens stated that it has a negative effect on their mood, that there is too much coverage of subjects like politics and coronavirus and that they are worn out by the amount of news in this field. The untrustworthiness and bias of the news, as well as the citizens' feeling that they could not do anything with the news they received are also among the reasons for selectively avoiding news content.

Citizens who finished primary education more often state that they avoid news because it leads to arguments they would rather avoid (31%), and because it is more difficult for them to follow and understand news (21%). A negative impact on the mood, too much reporting on political topics, untrustworthiness and bias of the news are the reasons most frequently listed by those close to the opposition parties and those who claim they are close to neither the governing, nor opposition parties.

REASONS FOR NEWS AVOIDANCE



Q: Why do you find yourself actively trying to avoid the news?

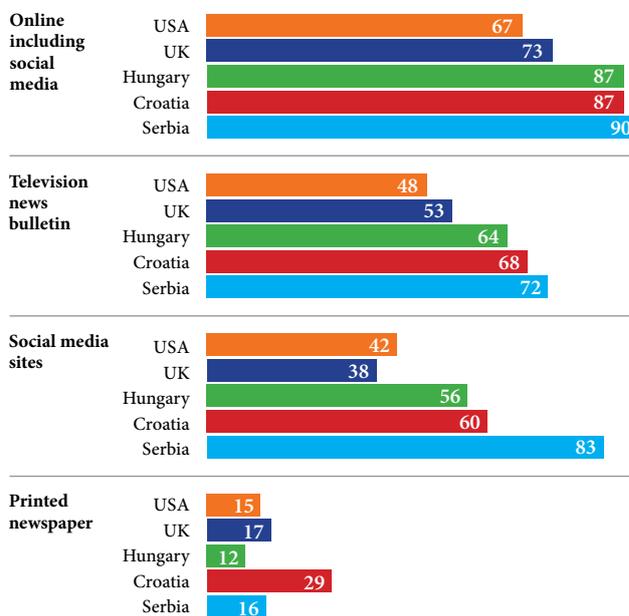
Baza: Respondents who avoided news, N=1,796

MEDIA USE

The two most reported sources of news are social media (83%) and television news bulletins (72%), while far behind in the third place are websites and apps of newspapers (57%). When looking at the main source of news, the situation changes. While the same three occupy the first three places, television is in the first place, since a third of the respondents (34%) use it as the main source, followed by almost equal proportions of social media (25%) and websites and apps of newspapers (22%).

These findings point to an increasing relevance of social networks as sources of news, but also to an intensive exposure to news, greater than in numerous other countries, which are recording a declining trend. In comparison with the selected countries, it is noticeable that the citizens of Serbia use all channels more, except printed media, and that, when it comes to using social networks as sources of news about important events, it is more widespread in our country than any other European country included in the study of the Reuters Institute.

PROPORTION WHO USED THE FOLLOWING AS SOURCES OF NEWS - SELECTED MARKETS



Q: Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news?

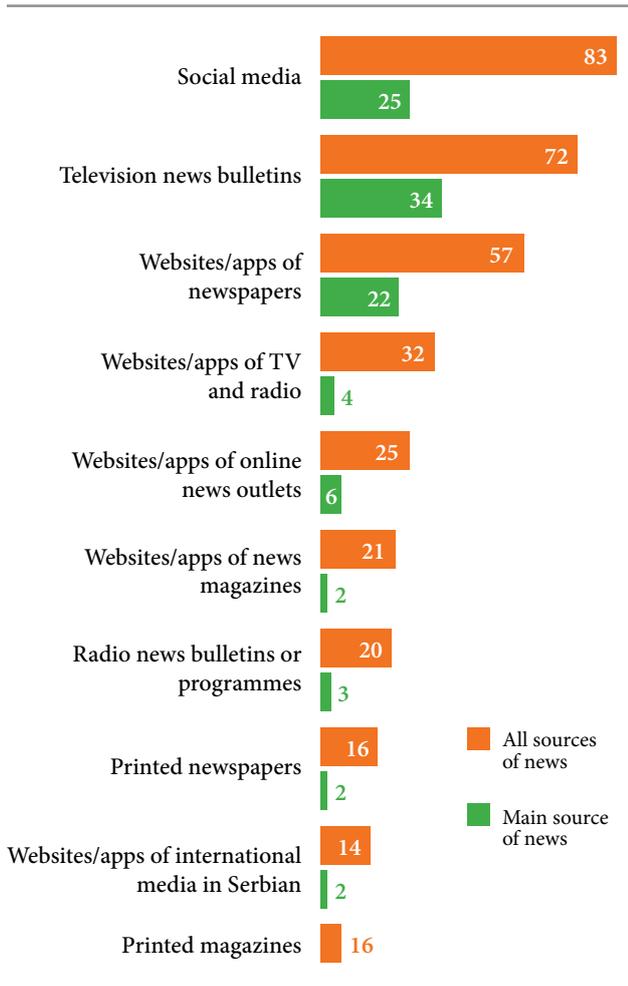
Apart from being the most frequently used news source, social media are very popular among all generations. Among those aged 25–44, the proportion is over 90% and even among the older ones (55+), it is still high (73%). However, social networks are often a secondary source or environment where one is exposed to news accidentally. They are an important news source among the young (18–24), where every other person using social networks sees them as the main source. That ratio changes with age and the situation in the 55+ group is significantly different, because only one in six people using social networks as a news source sees it as the main source.

Television is the only traditional media which still has its audience. Even the youngest respondents watch it (61%), while it is the most important media for the elderly – 82% of those older than 55 watched a television news bulletin last week.

The print is being irrevocably replaced with screens, and the digital editions of daily newspapers, i.e. the websites and applications, are

much more often used than paper editions (57% digital editions vs. 16% printed editions). The same situation is with weekly magazines, which are read in their print form by only 6% of the respondents, as opposed to 21% who read them online. The high ranking of the newspapers' sites and applications is a clear indicator of successful transition of popular brands of printed media into the online world.

SOURCES OF NEWS



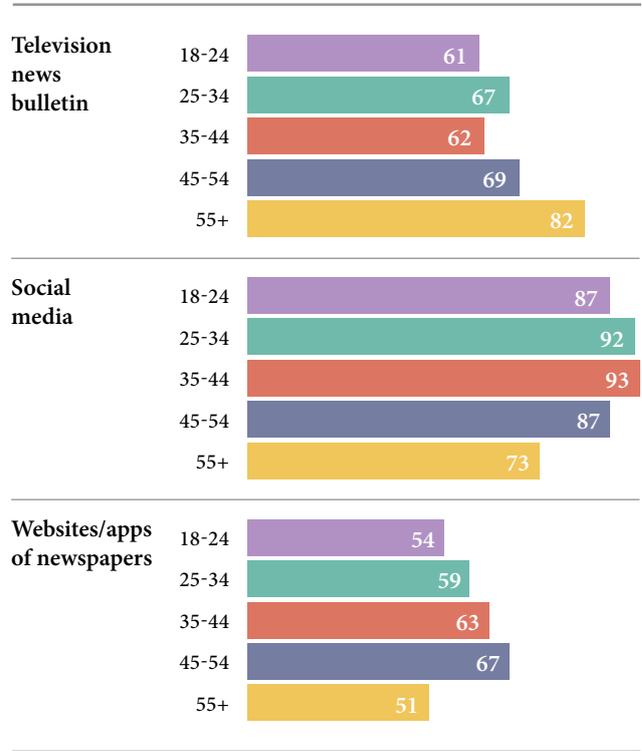
Q: Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news?
 Q: You say you've used these sources of news in the last week, which would you say is your main source of news?

When it comes to the main news source, there is a prominent generation gap reflected in the popularity of television news bulletins and social media. The television news bulletins are the main source of information for 17% of the youngest respondents and 52% of the oldest. The situation is reversed when it comes

to social media, which are reported as the main news source by 45% of the youngest and 12% of the oldest respondents. The use of websites and apps is much more equally distributed among all generations. It is the most popular news source for those in the 35–45 category (29%), while they are the least popular among those above 55 (19%).

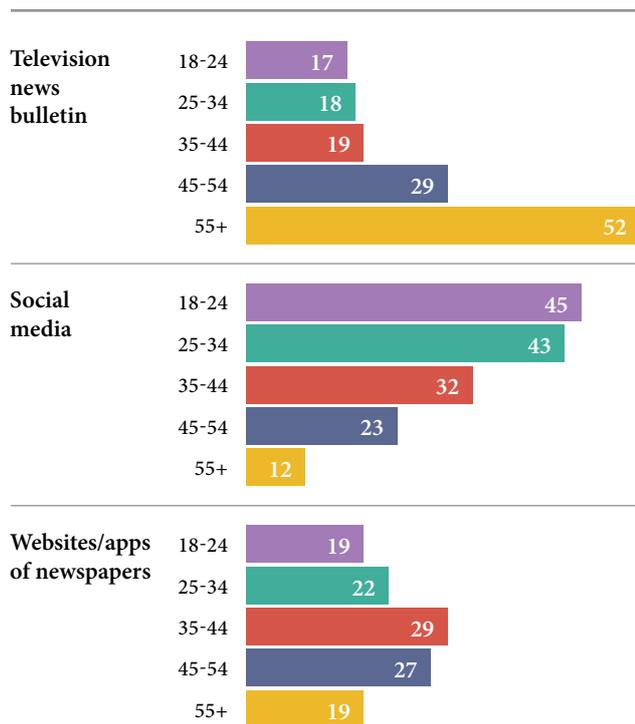
Gender, age, type of settlement, education, employment status, ideological and party orientation are all related to the choice of the main news source. For men, TV is the main source (39%), while women are divided between TV (30%) and social networks (30%). Television news bulletins are more commonly chosen as the main sources of news among those living in villages (47%) than those living in cities (31%). The citizens close to the governing parties choose television news bulletins as the dominant news source (58%), while among those closer to the opposition parties only 21% choose TV as the main source, with websites (27%) and social media (28%) being more popular choices.

DIFFERENCES IN USING SOURCES OF NEWS - BY AGE



Q: Which, if any, of the following have you used in the last week as a source of news?

DIFFERENCES IN MAIN SOURCE OF NEWS - BY AGE



Q: You say you've used these sources of news in the last week, which would you say is your main source of news?

Use of traditional media

The national public broadcaster RTS stands out as a traditional media whose news are the most followed – a half of the citizens (50%) state that they watched news on RTS during last week. RTS also boasts a rather loyal audience, with 41% of the respondents using it at least on three days a week. The popularity of the public broadcaster differs depending on the age – the older the audience, the more popular RTS is. Among those living in Belgrade and Vojvodina, it is not as popular as among those living in other parts of Serbia.

The television news bulletins by Prva TV, which also broadcasts nationally, is used almost in equal measure as the news of the cable news channel N1, especially when it comes to a more frequent use of at least three times a week. TV stations Pink and Nova S are slightly more popular than TV B92, and they are all more popular than Happy TV.

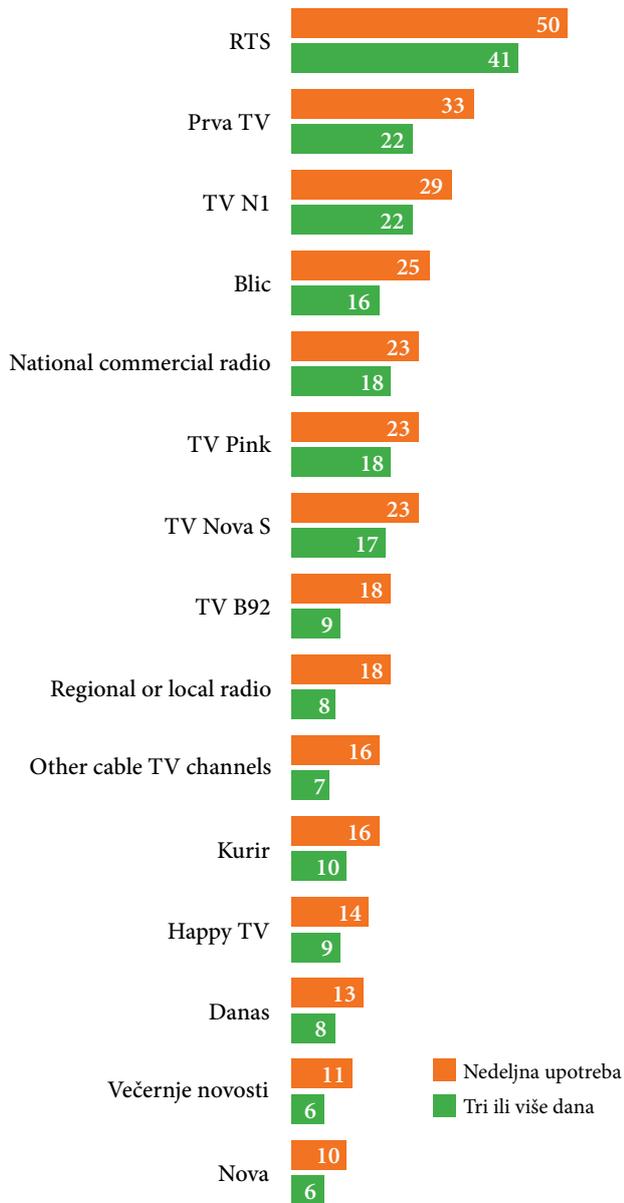
Numerous cable TV channels (Euronews, Kurir, K1, Una) have started working recently and they were included collectively in this research. TV N1 and TV Nova S were excluded from this group due to their specific position in the media system in Serbia, reflected in their editorial policy, audience share and previously earned high trustworthiness.¹³ Therefore, other cable TV channels that broadcast news bulletins are used on a weekly basis by 16% of the respondents, while regional or local TV channels are used by 8%.

When it comes to radio programs, news mainly reaches its audience through national commercial radio stations, which broadcast very short news. The younger population listens to this format more often than the older. Regional and local radio is by far the most relevant source of local news – 18% of the respondents listened to it last week.

Printed media, like everywhere else, are used less frequently. For example, Blic, which was the most popular in this category, was read by 16% of people last week, followed by Kurir (10%), while other newspapers boast single-digit percentages. Local printed media are also not very popular, only 6% of the respondents read it last week.

¹³ Milivojević, Snježana, Danka Ninković Slavnić, & Snežana Bajčeta. Informisanje u digitalnom okruženju u Srbiji. Beograd: Fakultet političkih nauka, 2020. bit.ly/3PV5qe7

USE OF OFFLINE MEDIA



Q: Which of the following brands have you used to access news offline in the last week (via TV, radio, print, and other traditional media)?
 Q: You said you have used the following brands to access news offline in the last week. Which of these, if any, did you use on 3 days or more?

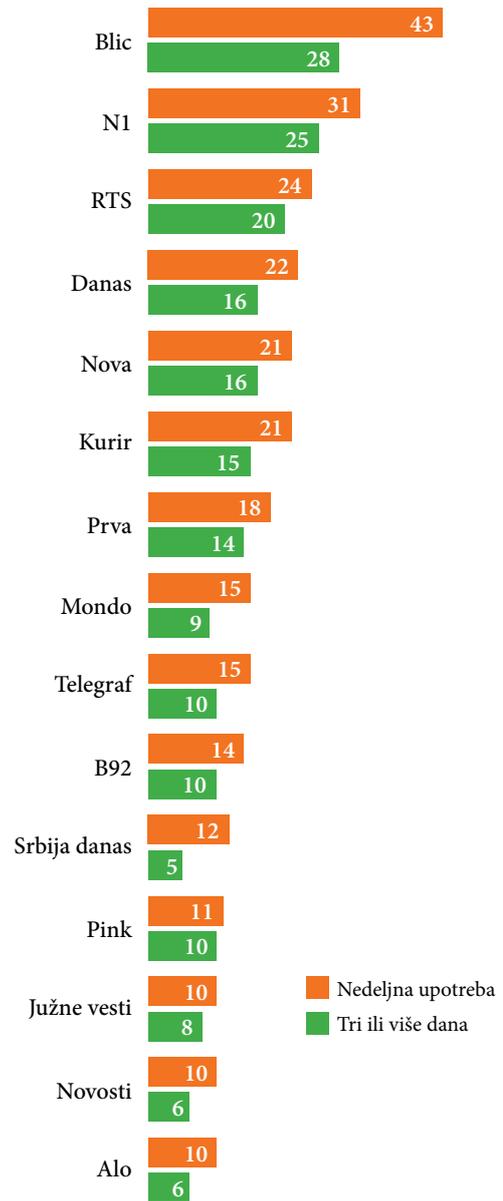
Online news brands

In the world of online news, Blic manages to reach the highest visibility, since 43% of respondents state they used it last week, but the number of regular readers is significantly lower (28%). In that sense, it can be said that the online communication strategy applied by Blic manages to create great exposure of the audience to its

content but fails to establish the habit of following the brand.

The runner-up among digital news is N1, followed by RTS, Danas, Nova and Kurir, which have a weekly reach of between 21% and 24%.

USE OF ONLINE MEDIA



Q: Which of the following brands have you used to access news online in the last week (via websites, apps, social media, and other forms of Internet access)?
 Q: You said you have used the following brands to access news online in the last week. Which of these, if any, did you use on 3 days or more?

Just like in the case of traditional media, there is the so-called *long tail* distribution in online news, which means that several media

have a large reach, while others have a very small one. There is a total of 15 media with more than 10% of citizens following them on a weekly basis, while 10 of them managed to attract more than 10% of visitors on the website, app or social media on three or more days last week.

What is interesting is the fact that the list of top 15 media is quite varied and that it includes three *digital-born* media – *Mondo*, *Telegraf* and *Srbija danas*, which are best positioned among the youngest audience, while their relevance decreases in older groups. For example, the content placed by *Telegraf* is seen by one in four people aged between 18 and 24 on a weekly basis. The same situation is with *Mondo*, while the *Srbija danas* portal is less popular (16%) in the same age category.

Beyond mainstream news

Apart from the national mainstream media, trying to reach as many people as possible, there are also many specialized media in Serbia. This research includes three such groups – local media, websites specialized in investigative journalism and international media with their local editions.

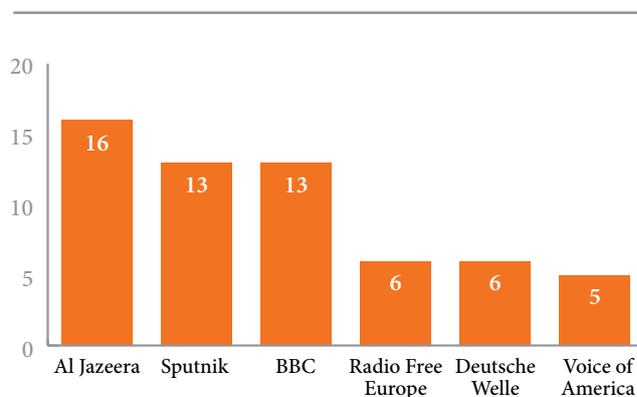
In general, the citizens most commonly receive local information in communication with their community, either in direct conversations with neighbours, family or friends (37%) or indirectly, via local online groups, forums and discussion groups (26%). Next on the list are local media – a quarter (25%) of respondents followed the content of local TV stations (through cable TV or online) and roughly the same number (24%) read local newspapers, either the printed or online edition. A local radio is listened to by 16% of citizens. The institutions and officials are the source of local news for every tenth citizen (11%). The citizens of Belgrade keep up with what is going on in their local community the least, i.e. a fifth of them (20%) did not use any of the previously mentioned options and they watch local TV stations half as much as the citizens of West, Central and South Serbia.

The fact that local media have their audience is confirmed by the example of websites *Južne vesti* and *Radio 021*. With 10% of the

respondents stating they read it on a weekly basis, i.e. 8% of those who do it on more than three days a week, *Južne vesti* is among 15 most followed online media, more read than online editions of numerous national brands. In its area, *Južne vesti* is extremely successful and every third citizen of southeast Serbia follows the news published by this portal – 36% on a weekly basis, 30% on three or more days a week. The *Radio 021* portal is followed weekly by 5% of respondents from the whole country, and by 13% of those from Vojvodina.

In Serbia, investigative journalism is developed among several online media that have this type of journalism in its focus. Combined, they manage to reach 18% of respondents on a weekly basis, while 8% of them state that they follow such media regularly (more than 3 days last week), which is an audience that should not be neglected. The audience proportion of individual, more popular websites dealing with investigative journalism ranges from 9%, enjoyed by *KRIK* and *Insajder*, over 7% (*BIRN*) to 3% (*CINS*). Even though these media are present only online and have numerous problems in their daily work, including attacks on their journalists, the data shows that the newsrooms dedicated to investigative journalism have managed to build up their audience with their constant presence on social networks and writing about topics that are invisible to mainstream media.

PROPORTION WHO USED THE FOLLOWING MEDIA TO ACCESS NEWS



Q: There are numerous websites of international news media in Serbian. Please select those you used to access news last week.

Despite being a small, commercially unattractive market, Serbia boasts numerous international media with their local or regional editions that the citizens can follow in the Serbian language. Their news is used at least once a week by 39% of the respondents. The most popular content was broadcasted by Arabic, Qatar-based, news network *Al Jazeera* (16%), while Russian *Sputnik* and British *BBC* had the same share (13%).

MEDIA BRANDS AND VISIBILITY OF JOURNALISTS

Journalists build their professional image and visibility, and some of them succeed in making their name a brand. Social media are the channels that help this process, while services like Patreon enable the citizens to pay for the content that comes from individual creators, such as podcast authors or journalists. This situation makes us wonder whether journalists could have a reputation that exceeds the one of their outlet, or to use marketing vocabulary, who is the more famous brand? That is why, apart from recognizing and selecting individual brands, we asked the respondents whether they use the name of the outlet or journalist when looking for news and which journalists they followed regularly.

It is easier for the citizens to remember and recognize traditional media brands than those

they encounter on the Internet. For example, 92% of respondents identified a traditional media from the list, while 87% did it when it came to online media. Since social networks are used intensively, this result shows that in certain cases people pay less attention to the news source when it is blended and melted with various other content.

However, media brands have an important role in the online environment as well, because when looking for news on the Internet, a great majority of citizens (71%) look for a specific media, and not for specific journalists. Although many journalists are present and active on social media, only 14% of the respondents search for concrete names of journalists on them. More than a half of the respondents (57%) cannot remember a journalist, including news anchors and columnists, they followed regularly.

Television is a media that significantly contributes to the visibility, recognisability and popularity of media professionals, which is why the list of journalists mentioned as being followed by the respondents is topped by three TV hosts – Zoran Kesić, Olja Bečković and Ivan Ivanović (*Nova S*), whose names were mentioned by 7% of the citizens each. Next on the list with 6% each are the morning show host at *TV Pink* Jovana Jeremić, editor and host of “Pregled dana” (*Overview of the day*) and “Dnevnik” (*Central news*) at *Nova S* Jelena Obućina and Jovan Memedović, author of the “Sasvim prirodno” (*Completely natural*) show.

JOURNALIST	MEDIA	PROFESSIONAL ROLE
Zoran Kesić	TV Nova S	Author and host of the show “24 minuta”
Olja Bečković	TV Nova S	Author and host of the show “Utisak nedelje”
Ivan Ivanović	TV Nova S	Author and host of the show “Veče sa Ivanom Ivanovićem”
Jovana Jeremić	TV Pink	Host of the morning show
Jelena Obućina	TV Nova S	Editor and host of “Pregled dana” and “Dnevnik Nove S”
Jovan Memedović	RTS	Author and host of the show “Sasvim prirodno”
Milomir Marić	TV Happy	Editor-in-chief and host of “Ćirilica”
Jovana Joksimović	TV K1	Host of the morning show “Uranak”
Žaklina Tatalović	TV N1	Journalist and author of the show “Rekonstrukcija”
Draža Petrović	Danas	Editor-in-chief

Q. Please type in the names of up to five journalists that you regularly pay attention to (e.g. news presenters, columnists, or reporters)

This list shows that TV is the media that contributes most to recognisability and it is a place where professional fame is gained. Among the ten most often mentioned people, only one of them is not primarily a TV journalist, host or author, and that is the editor-in-chief of *Danas* Dragoljub Draža Petrović, who was mentioned by 3% of the respondents. The results also suggest that the citizens remember the names of entertainment program authors more than those of people reporting news. Political satire and entertainment shows are presented more than the so-called “serious, political journalism”. This result can be interpreted as fatigue of news and some kind of dissatisfaction with its quality. Furthermore, it also indicates the erosion of the border between entertainment and news, as well as between various media professions.

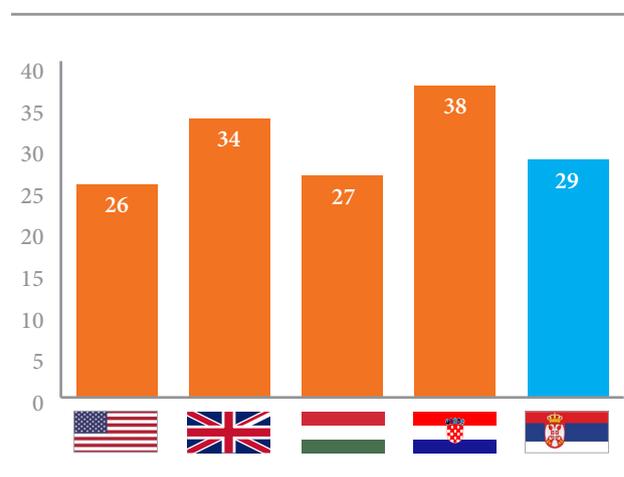
When we look at the media where these journalists work, four of them are at *TV Nova S*. Two female journalists (Olja Bečković and Jelena Obućina) provide political analyses and reports, while two male authors create humoristic and satirical shows (Zoran Kesić and Ivan Ivanović). This recognisability can be explained with the fact that *TV Nova S* gathered the authors of renowned and successful shows, who found it very difficult or even impossible to work at their previous TV stations due to the journalists’ critical attitude towards the authorities. Other media outlets are represented by one person, respectively. When it comes to *RTS*, the respondents only remembered Jovan Memedović and his show about nature. This is not surprising, since *RTS* is fighting for its share when it comes to entertainment programs and relaxing content, and not political shows.

TRUST IN MEDIA

Numerous studies have noted a crisis regarding the trust in media, as well as in other institutions. The global study of the Reuters Institute registered a mild increase in the trust in news in the year when the COVID pandemic broke out (2020). However, with just a few exceptions, a low level of trust in media re-appeared in many countries. The global average in 2022 is 42%, but with great differences between Finland (69%),

Denmark (58%) and Norway (56%), on the one hand, and Slovakia (26%), Greece (27%) and France (29%), on the other. The decrease in trust in news in some countries, such as the USA and the United Kingdom, is connected with major events that led to social polarization (Donald Trump winning the presidential election in 2016 and Brexit). In the countries of Central Europe, the trust in news was generally lower than in western and northern Europe, but it is particularly low in countries like Hungary, which have come under scrutiny for illiberal trends and suppressed freedom of the press.

TRUST IN THE NEWS - SELECTED MARKETS



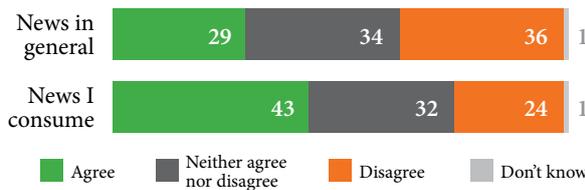
Q: I think you can trust most news most of the time.

There is a very low trust in news in Serbia – 29% of the citizens believe that news can be trusted in general, 34% are not sure, while 36% think that news cannot be trusted. In that sense, our country is among the countries where this trust is low. The reasons for that might be found in the data that show that most citizens believe that the media are under undue political and economic influence and that they do not work for the benefit of the society, which is the topic of the following chapter.

This general distrust is more prominent among the young, with more than a half of pupils and students (57%) not trusting the news. A majority of those who do not trust news live in urban areas, especially in the Belgrade region. Differences can be noticed also among the citizens

of different political preferences. A half of those (50%) closer to the governing parties generally trust the news, while among those who are closer to the opposition parties and those close to neither the governing, nor opposition parties the level of trust is significantly lower (24% and 21%, respectively).

PROPORTION THAT TRUSTS NEWS MOST OF THE TIME



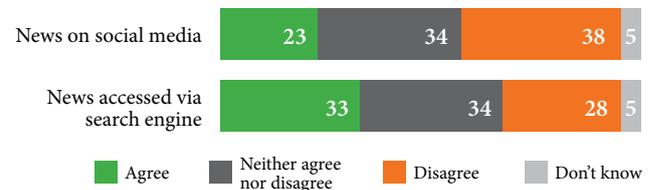
Q: I think you can trust most news most of the time.
 Q: I think I can trust most of the news I consume most of the time.

The trust in news is related to the interest in it. For example, 53% of respondents who are not interested in news think that it cannot be trusted, and only 18% think it can. On the other hand, 31% of those interested in news think that news cannot be trusted, while 37% believe it can.

The trust in news that the respondents chose to consume is at a higher level than the general trust. In other words, in the media environment that the respondents generally do not trust there are still some sources of news that some of them can trust. Political preferences and a generation gap remain visible, with over a half (51%) of retired people who trust the news they consume, and 59% of those close to the governing party who share that belief.

The news on social media, which is becoming an increasingly important segment in the news diet, is completely or predominantly trusted by 23%, 38% do not trust it, while a third (34%) neither trust, nor distrust it. The news found through a search engine is trusted by 33% of the citizens, 28% do not trust it, while 34% neither trust, nor distrust it. The least trust in the news on social media is expressed by the respondents with higher (40%) and secondary (38%) education, while 25% of those with primary education do not trust it.

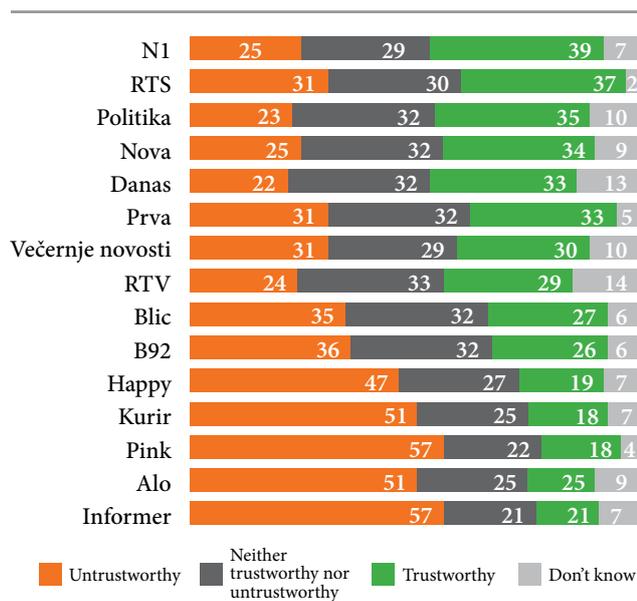
PROPORTION THAT TRUSTS NEWS MOST OF THE TIME



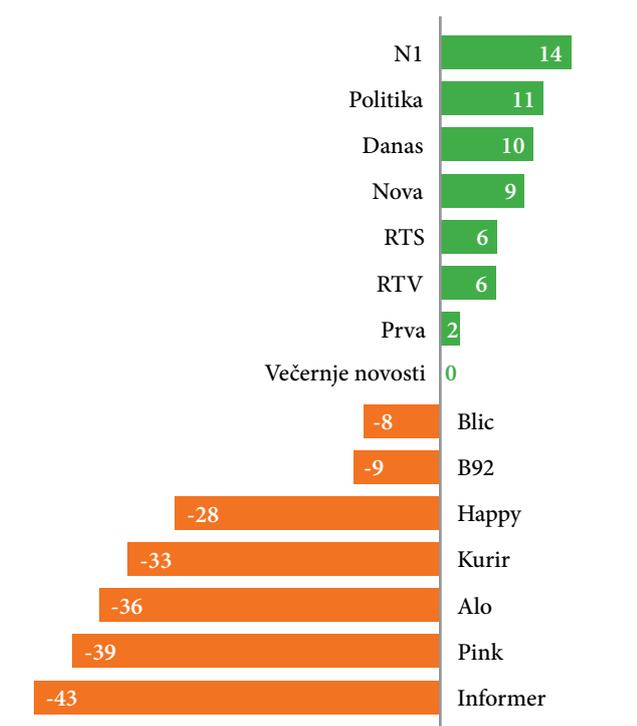
Q: I think I can trust most of the time the news on social media.
 Q: I think I can trust most of the time the news I access via search engines.

The data regarding the trust in news by various media brands suggest that a tabloid editorial policy lowers the level of trust. There is prominent distrust in *Kurir*, *Alo*, *Pink* and *Informer*, with over 50% of respondents who fully or mostly distrust the news published by these outlets. *N1* is the brand that enjoys the highest level of trust, followed by *RTS*, *Politika* and *Nova*. Together with *Danas*, *Prva TV* and *Radio-Television of Vojvodina*, they comprise a group of media with a positive balance of trust – there are more respondents that trust them than those who do not. That means that among the TV stations with national frequency in Serbia, only one manages to achieve a positive balance (*Prva TV*), while *Pink*, *B92* and *Happy* are mostly distrusted.

TRUST IN NEWS BRANDS



Q: How trustworthy would you say news from the following brands is?

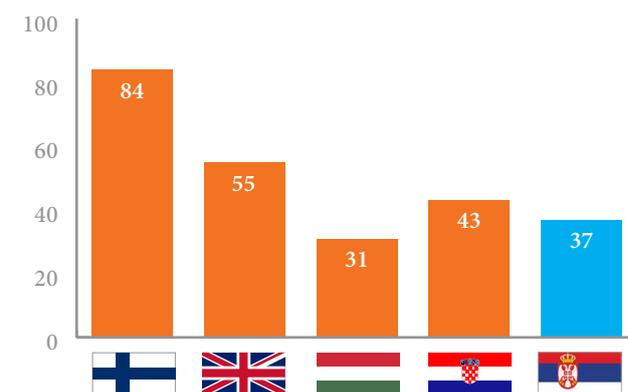


Trust balance is a difference between those who trust and distrust the news.

The trust in public service media is an important topic because of the special position and responsibility of public media. In European countries, where independent financing, managing and editorial policy has a long tradition, the differences are becoming increasingly prominent. The highest level of trust in the news

published by public service media is recorded in northern European countries – Finland (84%), Denmark (81%) and Norway (80%). The trust in the renowned BBC dropped from 75% in 2018 to 55% in 2022 due to a number of controversies and Brexit. Croatian HRT is close to the middle of the table of trust, far behind the private media, Nova TV and RTL, when it comes to trust. The Hungarian public broadcaster MTV is among the brands least trusted in that country. The situation in Serbia is somewhat better and RTS is high on the second place among national media. However, the rate of trust of 37%, accompanied by high distrust (31%), places this public service media close to the bottom of the European list.

TRUST IN NEWS - PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA - SELECTED MARKETS



Q: How trustworthy would you say news from the following brands is?

Political and commercial influence

The citizens of Serbia have an extremely negative opinion about the media and they believe the media care more for their own interest than the one of the whole society. They also think that the media are under strong undue influence of political and economic elites, while they perceive the media sphere as a field comprised of opposing media organizations.

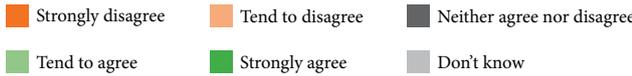
A great majority of the respondents believe that the media in Serbia are under political or government (66%) influence, as well as under economic or commercial influence (60%), while only 14% believe there is no political influence and 16% believe the media are economically independent.

INDEPENDENCE OF NEWS MEDIA

Political independence

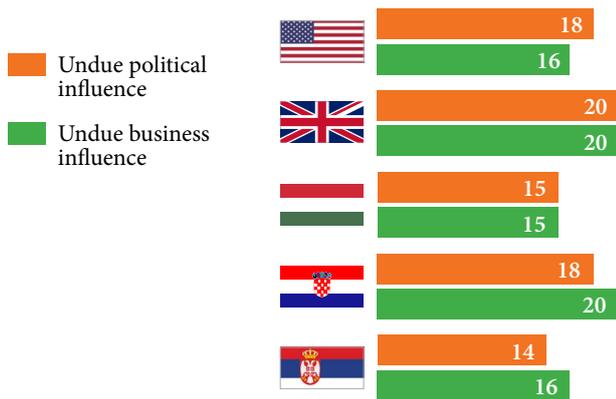


Commercial independence



Q: The news media in my country is independent from undue political or government influence most of the time.
 Q: The news media in my country is independent from undue business or commercial influence most of the time.

NEWS MEDIA ARE INDEPENDENT OF - SELECTED MARKETS



Q: The news media in my country is independent from undue political or government influence most of the time.
 Q: The news media in my country is independent from undue business or commercial influence most of the time.

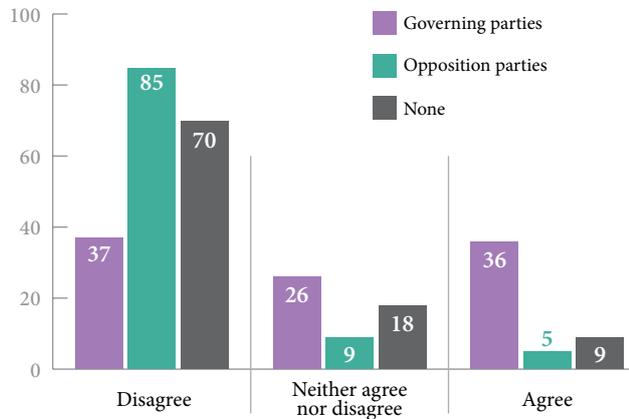
Such findings place Serbia close to the bottom of the list of European countries, where Greece occupies the last rank, since only 8% of its citizens believe that their media are independent from political influences, with Italy and Spain just slightly better, since 13% of people in both countries share that opinion. On the other end of this list are countries where citizens believe that media are independent from the undue influence of politics and state to a great extent. Those countries are Finland (50%), The Netherlands (46%), Denmark (43%), Norway (43%) and

Germany (41%). These results, in combination with the information that Serbia is not very different from the USA (18%) and the United Kingdom (20%), suggest that the number of people who see media as free is significantly lower in societies polarized on key political issues.

The perception that the media in Serbia are independent from political, government, economic and commercial influence is significantly different depending on a particular social group. Among the citizens ideologically closer to the left, the prevailing belief is that the media are not independent from either political or economic influence, than among other groups. Furthermore, although very few people believe there is independence, such belief is more common among those who see themselves as belonging to the right. The citizens who believe they are in the centre of the ideological spectrum more often have no clear attitude regarding the media's independence from political and economic influence.

The differences are even more prominent when it comes to party allegiances. Among those closer to the governing parties, just over a third (36%) believe that the media are independent from political and government influence, as well as of economic and commercial influence (37%). A completely different perception is shared by those closer to the opposition parties, where only 5% of them believe there is political and 8% believe there is economic independence. A convincing majority believe that the media are dependent on political (85%) and economic interests (80%). Somewhat more moderate, but similar attitudes are shared by the citizens who do not feel close to either governing or opposition parties.

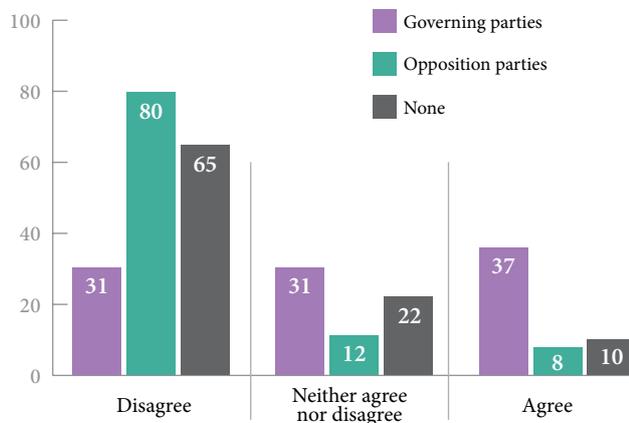
POLITICAL INDEPENDENCE OF NEWS MEDIA - BY PARTY PREFERENCE



Q: The news media in my country is independent from undue political or government influence most of the time.

Q: Which parties are closer to your preferences, governing parties or opposition parties?

COMMERCIAL INDEPENDENCE OF NEWS MEDIA - BY PARTY PREFERENCE



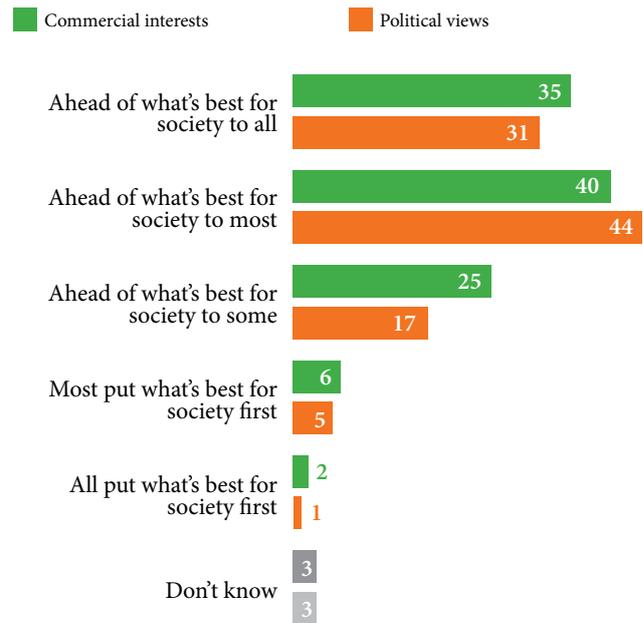
Q: The news media in my country is independent from undue business or commercial influence most of the time.

Q: Which parties are closer to your preferences, governing parties or opposition parties?

The questions regarding the perception of media independence included additional ones that tried to find out how much the media try to look after what is best for society. The findings are in line with the previously mentioned data. The citizens believe that the media do not work in the interest of the public, but that they mainly put their commercial interests and political views ahead of what is best for society. Three quarters of

the respondents believe that is the case with all or most media – 75% when it comes to the political views of the media and 74% when it comes to their commercial interests.

PRIORITIES OF NEWS ORGANIZATIONS IN SERBIA WHEN IT COMES TO:



Q: Having in mind the relationship between the interests of society and business, which of the following comes closest to your view of news organisations in your country?

Q: Having in mind the relationship between the interests of society and political views, which of the following comes closest to your view of news organisations in your country?

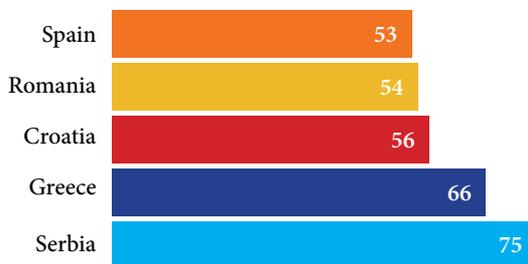
Such attitudes towards how much the media care about what is best for society was not recorded in any of the 46 countries included in the Reuters Institute study. The global average is 40% for political views and 42% for commercial interests, but in the countries where media enjoy a high degree of trust, such as Finland, such an opinion is expressed by 20% of the people, while in the USA and the United Kingdom around 45% share this belief. Even in the countries that boast very strong scepticism towards media and which are geographically close to Serbia, with a similar culture and comparable media environment, there is no such extreme attitude regarding the lack of will on behalf of media to look after the public interest.

PROPORTION WHO THINK THAT ALL OR MOST NEWS ORGANIZATIONS - SELECTED MARKETS

Put commercial interests ahead of what's best for society



Put political views ahead of what's best for society



Q: Having in mind the relationship between the interests of society and business, which of the following comes closest to your view of news organisations in your country?

Q: Having in mind the relationship between the interests of society and political views, which of the following comes closest to your view of news organisations in your country?

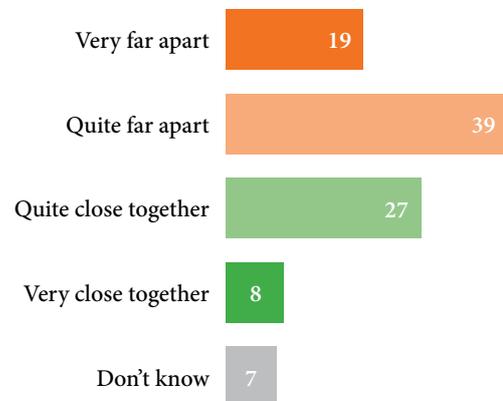
Together with the previous findings, this reflects great dissatisfaction with the media in Serbia among its citizens and explains the low level of trust and why a high number of people avoid news on purpose. It is clear that the citizens do not see the media as critics of the elite, the “watchdogs of democracy”, but as closely connected with those enjoying political and economic power and interested in their own position and wellbeing, rather than in the society as a whole.

The ideological and political orientations are connected with the attitudes regarding the social responsibility of media, but the difference is less prominent than that related to the perception of political and economic influence. The least critical towards the media are those close to the governing parties, because 58% of them believe that all or most media put commercial or political interests ahead of everything. On the other hand, there are those closer to the opposition parties

and neutrals. Around four fifths of them believe that the media put their commercial interests (83% of the opposition-inclined and 80% of neutrals) and their political views (84%, i.e. 78%) ahead of the wellbeing of society. Still, regardless of the differences, the fact is that in each of these categories more than a half see the media as institutions that look after themselves, rather than the general interest. It is interesting to note that the most critical towards the media are those who are close to neither governing nor opposition parties, who claim, more frequently than others, that all media put their own commercial interests (42%) or political views (39%) before everything else.

The citizens notice the division between the media based on the political position they take. Most (58%) people see large media organizations as opposing, whereas 35% of the respondents believe they are actually close.

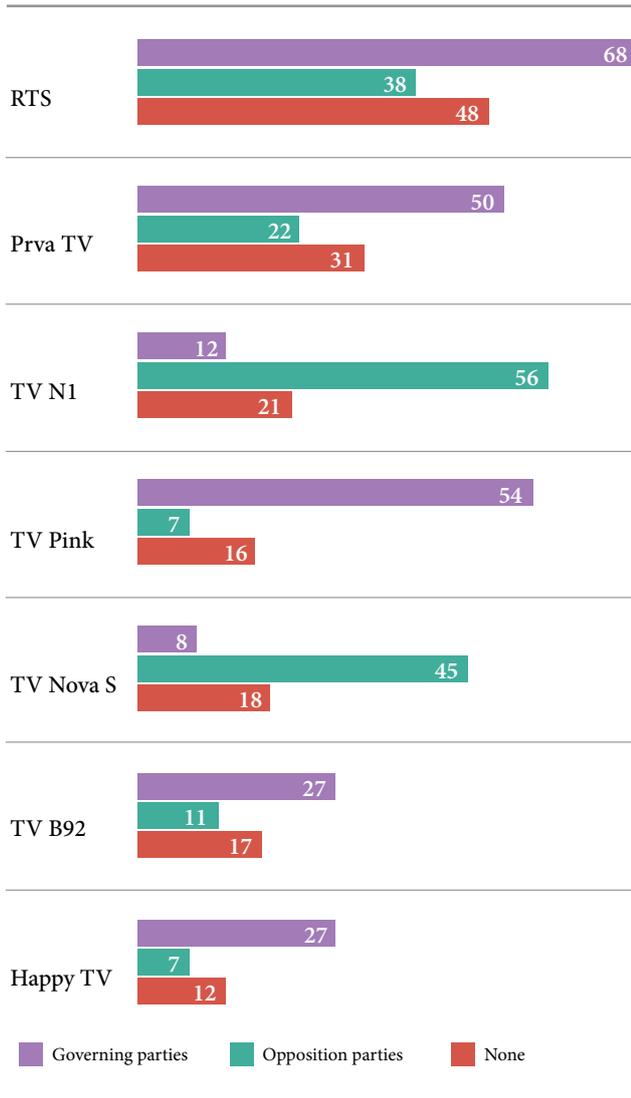
ARE MAIN NEWS ORGANIZATIONS IN SERBIA CLOSE OR FAR APART?



Q: In your view, how politically close together or far apart are the main news organisations in Serbia?

These results could be analysed together with those related to the media use. For instance, among the TV stations that the citizens watch in the traditional form, there are differences depending on the political preferences of the citizens. *Radio Television of Serbia*, as well as the four commercial TV stations (*Prva*, *Pink*, *B92* and *Happy*) attract more people who are closer to the governing parties. On the other hand, TV stations *N1* and *Nova S* are mainly watched by those closer to the opposition parties.

OFFLINE NEWS BRANDS AND RESPONDENTS' POLITICAL PREFERENCES



Q: Which of the following brands have you used to access news offline in the last week (via TV, radio, print, and other traditional media)?
 Q: Which parties are closer to your preferences, governing parties or opposition parties?

MISINFORMATION

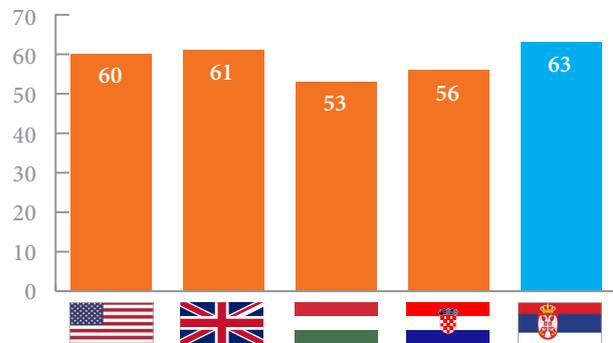
Deceptive and incorrect information are a growing concern of the citizens. Although the data provided by fact-checking initiatives in Serbia show that the traditional media are often the source of misinformation¹⁴, it is believed that the less regulated and controlled Internet is

14 Vučić, Marija, Milica Ljubičić & Vesna Radojević. "Na naslovnim stranama šest tabloida blizu 1000 manipulativnih vesti." 06.07.2022. <http://bit.ly/3IAcPh6>
 CRTA. "Report: Mapping disinformation in the Serbian media." 25.01.2023. <https://bit.ly/3Z51ET2>

actually where "fake news" are grown. Along with populism, polarization and economic interests, the war in Ukraine also brought additional concern regarding the truthfulness of information that the citizens come across on the Internet.

Two out of three respondents (63%) wonder what is true and what is not on the Internet in the context of the news they receive, which is above the global average (54%) recorded by the Reuters Institute. This concern regarding the truthfulness of the news on the Internet is more prominent in some countries of Asia or Latin America, as well as in Australia. Only one European country, Portugal, expressed a greater concern (71%) regarding this issue. These results can be interpreted in several ways: as a reflection of awareness regarding the amount of misinformation, raised, for example, at media literacy programs, or, on the other hand, as a result of frequent encounters with problematic content of news.

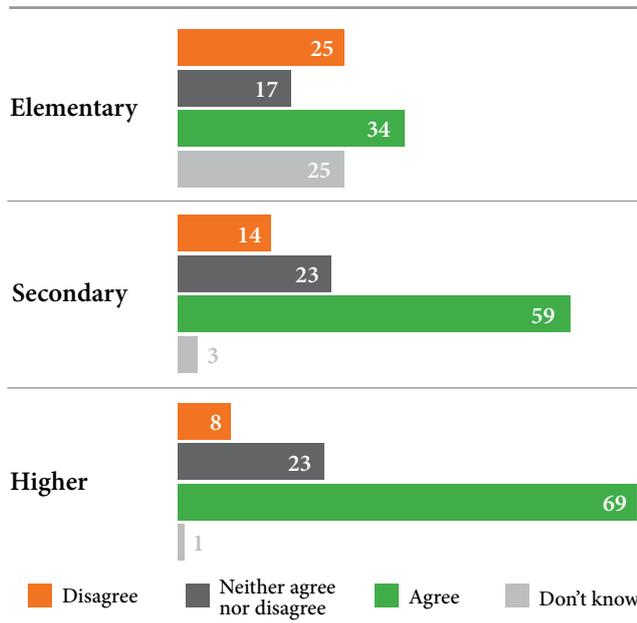
CONCERN ABOUT DISINFORMATION - SELECTED MARKETS



Q: Thinking about online news, I am concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet.

In Serbia, there are significant differences related to the level of education, where those with higher education are more concerned than those with primary education. The reliance on social networks as the main news source also plays a role when it comes to the level of concern. Namely, among those concerned, 64% of them use social networks as the main news source, while among those who are not concerned there are 48% of those who use social networks as their primary news source.

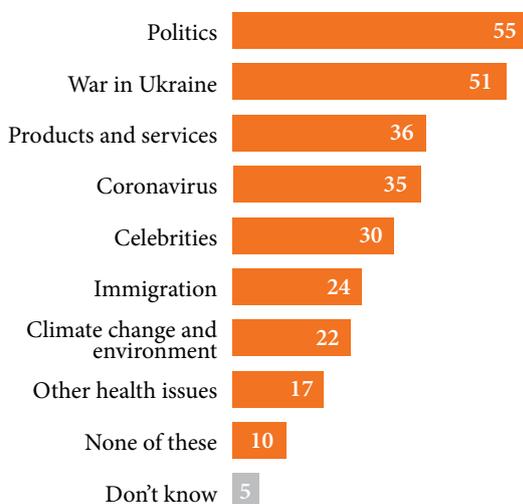
I AM CONCERNED WHAT IS REAL AND WHAT IS FAKE ON THE INTERNET - BY EDUCATION



Q: Thinking about online news, I am concerned about what is real and what is fake on the internet.

A large number of citizens (85%) have encountered fake and misleading information, mostly related to politics and the war in Ukraine. A slightly smaller number of citizens noticed misinformation related to products and services, coronavirus and celebrities.

PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE SEEN FALSE AND MISLEADING INFORMATION ON SELECTED TOPICS



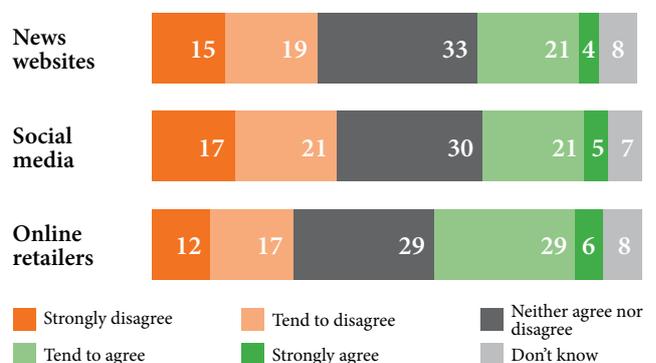
Q: Have you seen false or misleading information about any of the following topics, in the last week?

DIGITAL WORLD ECONOMICS

The digital world economics is predominantly based on the “data for service” model, which means that citizens typically do not pay for access to various platforms (such as social networks and websites), but in turn agree to be shown various advertisements which are personalized based on the digital traces that they left while conducting various online activities. Numerous affairs, the *Cambridge Analytica* being the most infamous, resulted in the topics of privacy and data protection being more visible on the public agenda, both in Serbia and abroad. The concerns, especially in the EU countries, regarding the lack of transparency about what data are collected, who they are sold to and how they are used later had led to adopting the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which came into effect in 2018. A new Law on Personal Data Protection was adopted in Serbia in 2019 and it includes adapted provisions from the GDPR.

The opinions of the citizens regarding how their data are used in the digital environment are split. Around 30% of the respondents are ambivalent, i.e. they neither agree nor disagree with the claim that various online platforms used their data responsibly. The citizens showed less trust in the way their data are used by news websites (25%) and social media (25%) than online retailers (35%).

I TRUST THAT ONLINE SITES USE MY DATA RESPONSIBLY



Q: I trust most news websites to use my data responsibly.

Q: I trust most social media sites to use my data responsibly.

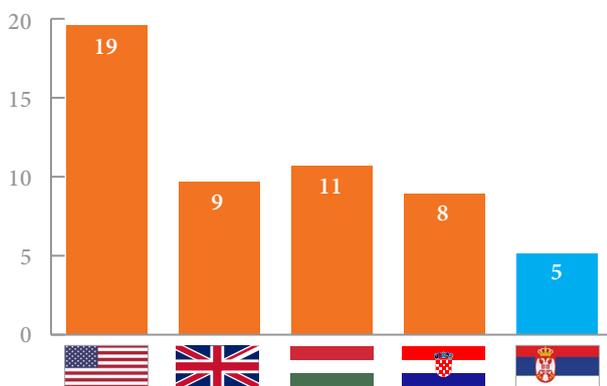
Q: I trust most online retailers to use my data responsibly.

The level of trust that the data are used responsibly in Serbia is approximately the same as the average of the 46 countries included in the Reuters Institute research when it comes to social networks and online retailers, but the situation is different regarding news websites. One quarter of citizens in Serbia believe that news websites use their data responsibly, while the global average is around one third (33%), ranging from almost a half in Finland (49%) to less than a fifth (18%) in the United States of America.

The global report states that the level of general trust in media is connected with the belief that websites would use citizens' data responsibly. Therefore, it is not surprising that only every fourth citizen in Serbia trusts that news websites would use personal data responsibly.

Bearing in mind the low level of trust in media, the negative opinion the citizens have about the media in general, as well as the fact that a vast majority of content is available for free, it does not come as a surprise that only 5% of the citizens paid for online news last year. The citizens of Serbia, in comparison with other European countries included in the global study, pay for online news the least frequently. At the other end of this list are the citizens of Norway, since 41% of them paid for online news last year, while a half of them paid for local or regional online media.

PROPORTION WHO PAID FOR ONLINE NEWS - SELECTED MARKETS

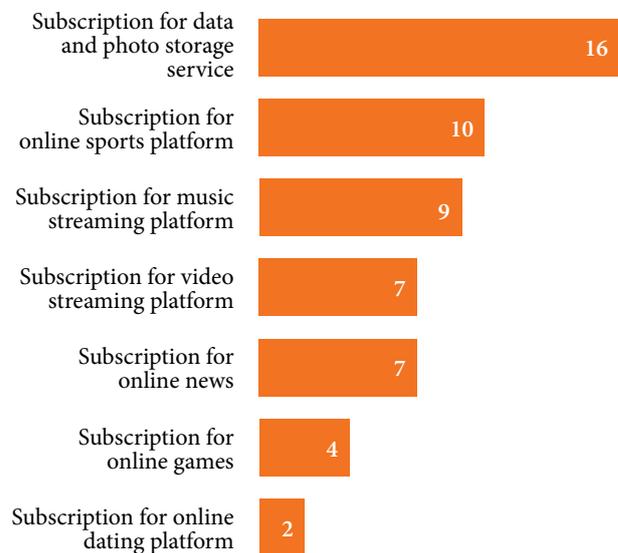


Q: Have you paid for online news content, or accessed a paid for online news service in the last year?

Apart from the aforementioned factors that are closely related to the media sector, the fact remains that the economic standard, the

rise of inflation and the imminent, even greater economic crisis caused by the rise in the price of energy-generating products lower the chances for the citizens to budget for some kind of online content. Just above a half of the respondents (55%) would pay for a digital service, if they had to choose one. The older the respondents, the willingness to pay is lower. Among the youngest group of respondents (18–24) 73% chose a service they would pay for, while among the oldest ones (55+) the share of those who would pay for such a service is 41%.

FIRST CHOICE IF DECIDING TO PAY FOR AN ONLINE SERVICE



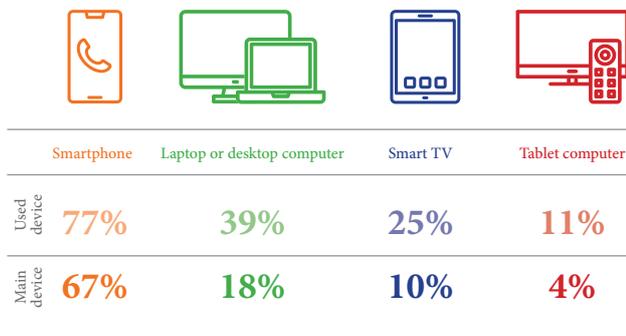
Q: Which of the following online services would you be most willing to pay for subscription, if you had to choose only one (regardless of those you currently have)?

Regardless of what they are paying for now, if they had to choose one service, the news would be in fifth place. The first choice would be a data storage service, followed by a sport-related one and there is a clear difference between the priorities of men and women. While 22% of women would choose a data storage service, only 8% of men would make the same choice. On the other hand, when it comes to sport-related services, 15% of men and 6% of women would make it their number one choice. The youngest respondents are most interested in music, with just over a fifth of them (22%) who would pay for music streaming services.

ACCESS TO ONLINE NEWS

The citizens of Serbia are well-equipped when it comes to digital devices. The most popular are mobile phones (97%), laptop and desktop computers (74%), smart TVs (52%) and tablets (28%). Among them, smartphones are the main device used to access news (67%), leaving laptop and desktop computers (18%), smart TVs (10%) and tablets (4%) far behind them. Laptop and desktop computers are the main devices for accessing news among those above 55 years of age, while younger generations prefer using smartphones.

DEVICES USED FOR ACCESSING NEWS

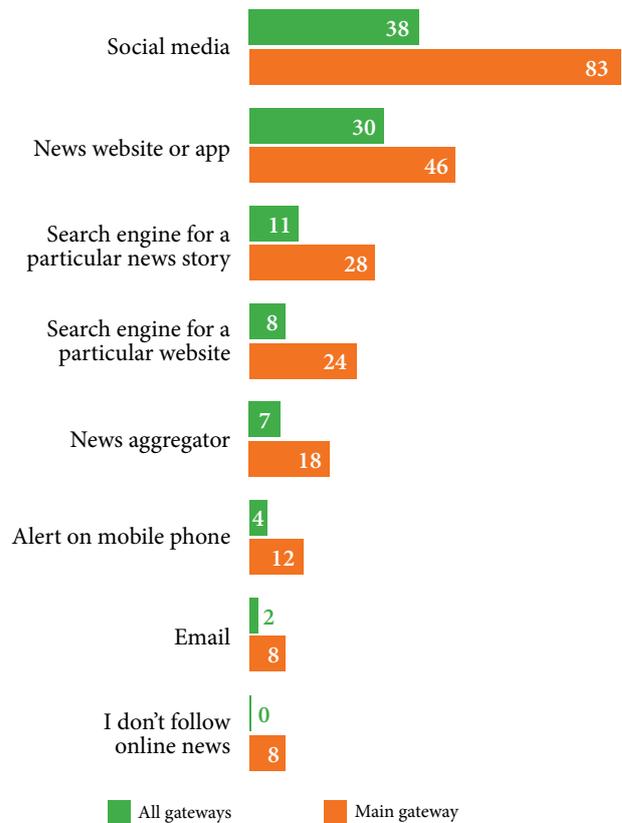


Q: Which, if any, of the following devices have you used to access news in the last week?

Q: You've said you use the following devices to access news in the last week, which is your main way of accessing online news?

Regardless of the device used, the citizens can access news in different ways. For the media themselves, the most important are their official websites and applications, while social media, search engines and similar are considered important, but a side-entrance that does not leave a high enough level of control and profit for the media. In Serbia, there is a competition between the websites and apps, on one side, which are used as the main gateway by 30% of the citizens and social networks on the other, which are the main gateway for 38% of the citizens. Search engines are less used in Serbia (19%) in comparison to the global average (26%). News aggregators as the main gateway are used by a relatively small number of respondents (7%), which is close to the global average. Among the aggregators, the most popular are *Google news* (27%), *Naslovi.net* (19%) and *Dnevnenovine.rs* (10%).

GATEWAY TO NEWS



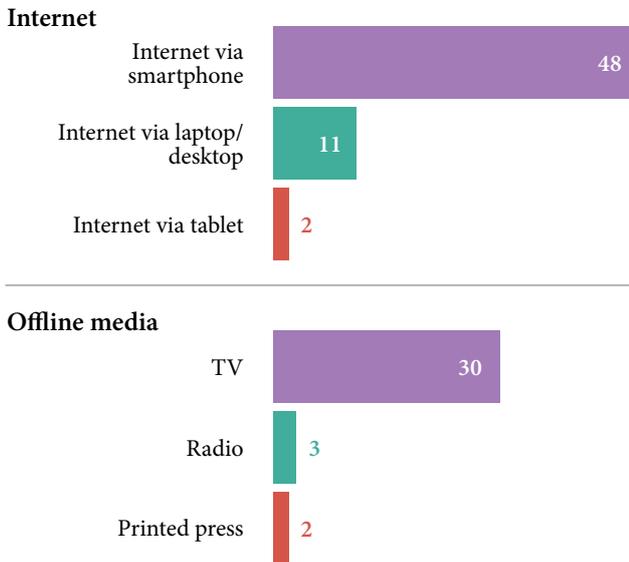
Q: Thinking about how you got news online (via computer, mobile or any device) in the last week, which were the ways in which you came across news stories?

Q: Which of these was the main way in which you came across news in the last week?

The first morning encounter with the news almost two thirds of the citizens (61%) have on the Internet, while more than a third (35%) prefer to use traditional media. Smartphones and smart TVs are the main devices for most people. These results are consistent with the data regarding usage of different types of media, which suggests that the morning practice reflects people's preferences when it comes to traditional and digital media.

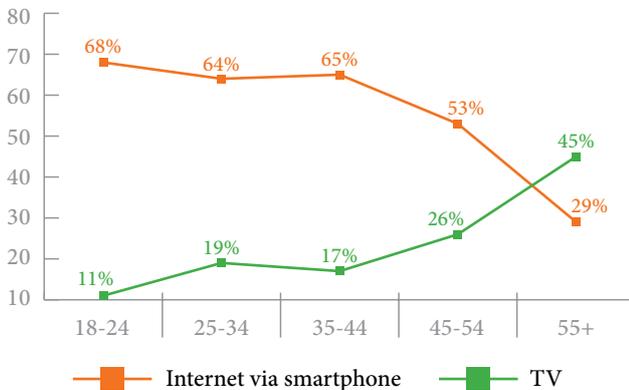
What we also note here are significant generation gaps. Every tenth person in the youngest category (18–24) turns the TV on in the morning, while almost every second person in the 55+ group does the same. Vice versa, two out of three young persons check the news on their smartphone in the morning, as opposed to one out of three persons from the oldest category.

FIRST MORNING ENCOUNTER WITH NEWS



Q: What is the first way you typically come across news in the morning?

FIRST MORNING ENCOUNTER WITH NEWS - BY AGE



Q: What is the first way you typically come across news in the morning?

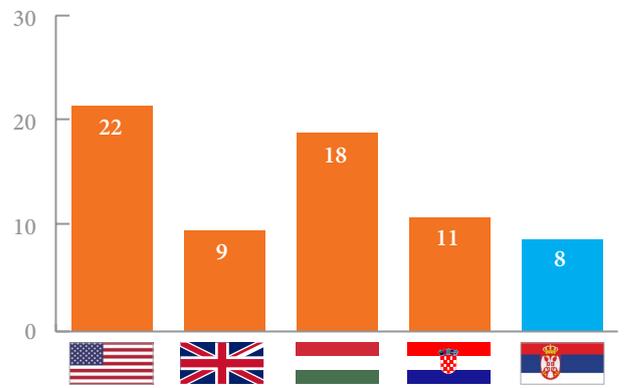
Among those who find their morning news on the Internet, most of them visit social media (45%), followed by those who opt for websites and apps (31%) and links that appear on desktop computers. Among social media, the most popular is Facebook, where 27% of the citizens find the first news, with Instagram (9%), Twitter (4%) and YouTube (3%) far behind. Again, we see that the networks that are generally used more are also used to access morning news.

Media formats in digital environment

The Western markets, with relatively rich media outlets, are in constant lookout for new formats that would meet the needs of audiences and offer a better experience related to news consumption. The explosion of the podcast's popularity over the past several years has been replaced by email news, most commonly in a format of a newsletter. The domestic market traditionally tries to follow the trends from the West, so many national media outlets have their podcasts and, more and more, their newsletters.

The global study conducted by the Reuters Institute records that 17% of people use email as a news source, with Austria leading the way (24%). The newsletters in Serbia have a very modest reach. During one week, the format of a newsletter is consumed by 8% of the respondents, but for only 2% as the main gateway to news.

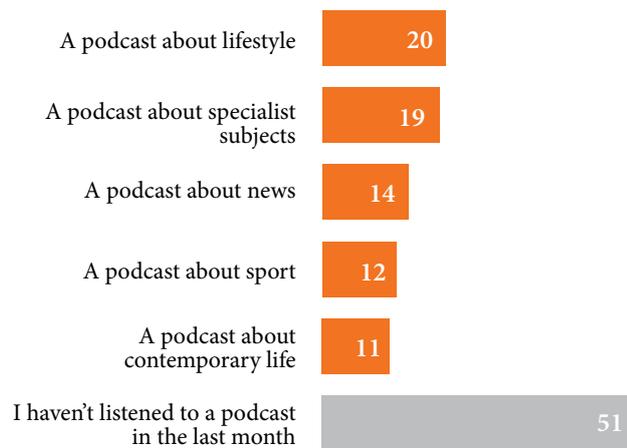
PROPORTION WHO CAME ACROSS NEWS VIA NEWSLETTER IN THE LAST WEEK - SELECTED MARKETS



Q: Thinking about how you got news online (via computer, mobile or any device) in the last week, which were the ways in which you came across news stories?

The podcast is an attractive format that was used by almost a half (49%) of the respondents over the course of one month. The Reuters Institute global research also noted the popularity of the podcast, with 34% of people using it in 20 countries where the researchers were sure that the term “podcast” was understood correctly. The increase in popularity of three percent in the global study is explained as a probable consequence of the fact that people have again started commuting to work after the pandemic.

LISTENING A PODCAST - BY TOPIC



Q: Which of the following types of podcast have you listened to in the last month?

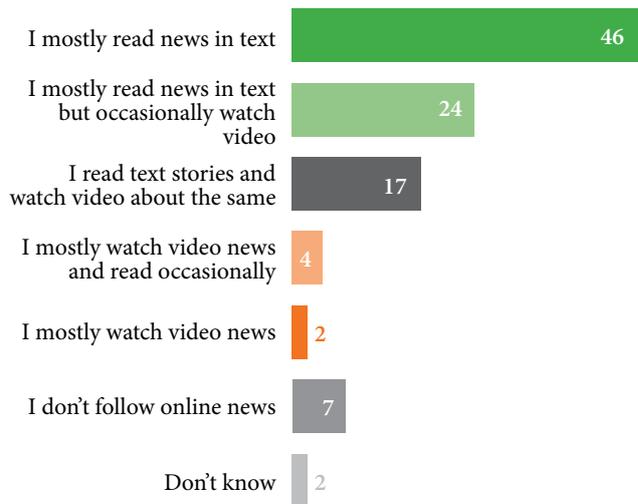
In Serbia, the most important podcasts are about lifestyle (food, fashion, traveling, entertainment), followed by those about specialist subjects (science, technology, art, health). These are followed by news podcasts (politics and world events), sport and contemporary life (e.g. social events, crime).

Text vs. video form

With the increasing popularity of TikTok and Instagram, digital news in a video form is becoming a way of receiving information and it seems that more and more outlets are investing in it. However, the global study shows that textual news is still more popular than video news. There are some differences between countries, with Finland at the top when it comes to those who prefer a text (85%) and Mexico at the bottom (45%), with one quarter of respondents from Mexico preferring a video, while others were indifferent.

The respondents from Serbia mainly follow the textual news (70%). The video form is preferred by 6%, while 17% of them follow online news in the form of a text and in a video form in equal measure. Among those who most often read news, there are more women than men, and somewhat younger generations (under 55 years of age). Among the youngest audience (18–24), most people follow news in a video form.

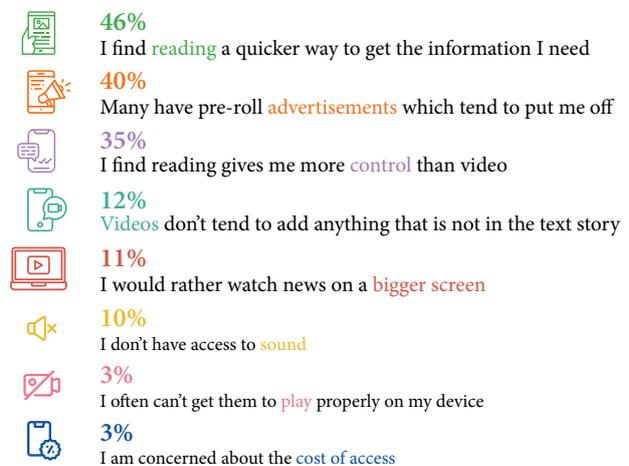
TEXT OR VIDEO



Q: In thinking about your online news habits, which of the following statements applies best to you?

As the main reason for selecting textual news, respondents stated that they find reading a quicker way to get the information. Those who follow video news believe watching news is easier than reading. Pre-roll advertisements in video news are considered off-putting, while reading gives them more control than watching. Those who prefer videos claim that a video tells a more complete story and that it is more engaging than text. A segment of respondents (18%) say that watching news is not their choice, but that social media are more likely to suggest video news than those in the form of a text.

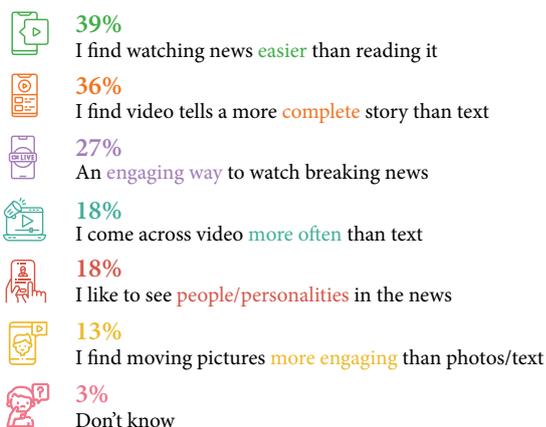
WHY NEWS IN TEXT FORM?



Q: You say you prefer to read news in text rather than watch online video... What are the main reasons for this?

Base: Respondents who follow news in text form, N=1,410

WHY NEWS IN VIDEO FORM?



Q: You say you prefer to watch online news video rather than read it in text... What are the main reasons for this?

Base: Respondents who follow news in video form, N=113

SOCIAL NETWORKS, NEWS CONSUMPTION, AND JOURNALISM

When one looks at the situation regarding social media from a global perspective, it could be said that those networks which have managed to reach young audiences are growing very quickly. For example, based on the data from 12 countries where the Reuters Institute followed the trend of using TikTok, this network has grown by 11% over the past two years, while Instagram has grown by 32% over the past eight years. According to the same source, in the last year (2022) only TikTok, Instagram and Telegram were on the rise. On the other hand, the veterans in the world of social networks, Facebook and Twitter, have stagnated.

The importance of social media and applications for direct messaging was once again confirmed by the war in Ukraine, while it is fought both on the ground and on social networking sites. For instance, very soon after the conflict broke out, Telegram was recognized as a “digital battlefield”, while the attack of Russia on Ukraine is also referred to as “the first TikTok war”.¹⁵ This, of course, does not mean that information, misinformation and propaganda are not spread using other networks, but simply that these two have attracted the most attention.

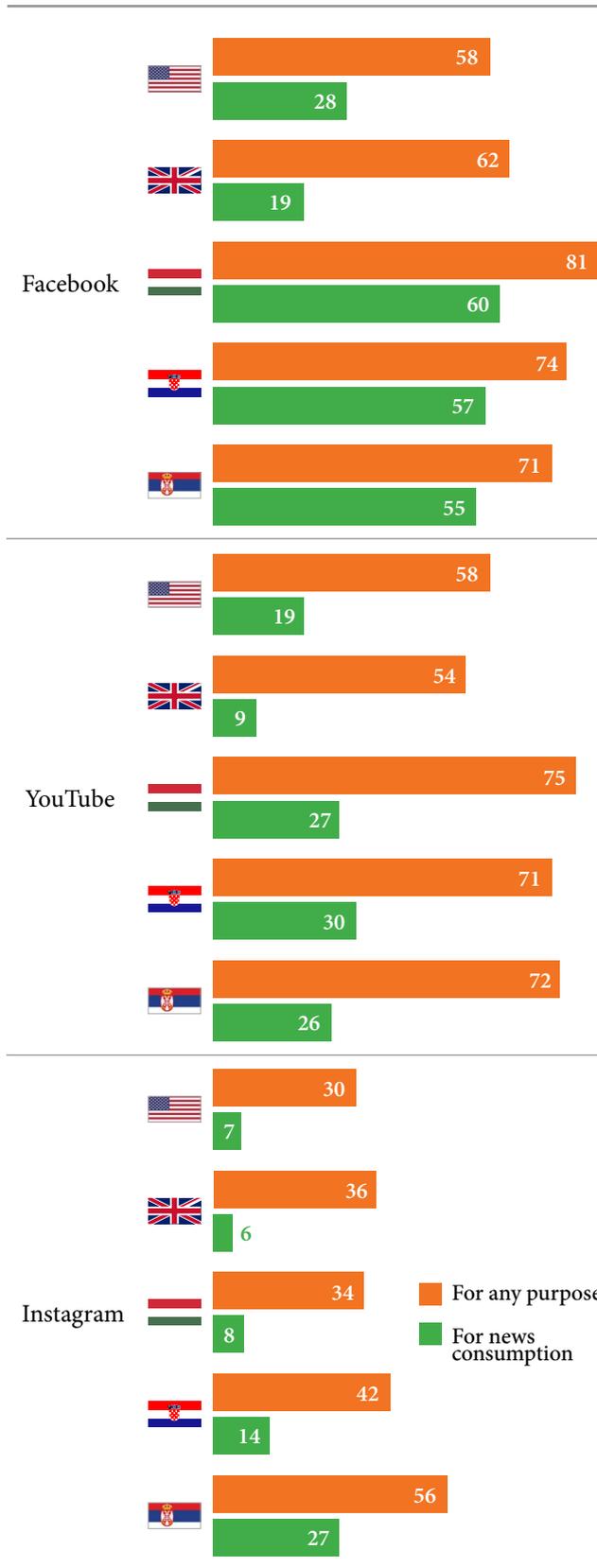
Twitter also appeared in the focus of public attention when it was bought in 2022 by Elon Musk, who immediately made a series of contradictory decisions. Its consequences remain to be seen in the future. Still, the fact remains that this development put Mastodon, until then a less popular social networking site, in the spotlight.

When it comes to social media, Serbia mainly follows trends, with certain market-related specific features that exist in all countries. Social networks are used very intensively, 95% of the citizens use them at least on a weekly basis, and the three dominant networks used by at least 70% of the citizens are Viber (75%), YouTube (72%) and Facebook (71%). When it comes to how much we use social networks, we are similar to countries in South and Eastern Europe, such as Romania, Greece, Hungary and Croatia, where citizens use social media more than in Western Europe. The main specific characteristic is the great popularity of Viber, which has surpassed Facebook in all segments and taken the first place in Serbia.

Even though the percentages vary, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram are near the top in all European countries included in the global study, accompanied by, depending on the country, an application for direct messaging. As the figure shows, Serbia is similar to Croatia and Hungary, while people in the USA and the United Kingdom use these most popular social media less, especially for following news. On the other hand, Instagram is much more popular in our country, both in general and as a news source. The only European country where it is used more is Turkey (69% in general, 40% for news). Instagram is also used by over 50% of the citizens of Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and, what is interesting as a contrast to all these South European countries, in Sweden. However, the use of Instagram for news in these countries is significantly rarer than in Serbia.

15 The Telegraph, “Russians and Ukrainians fight for likes in the first TikTok war.” 25.02.2022. [bit.ly/3YOmM0r](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2022/02/25/russians-and-ukrainians-fight-for-likes-in-the-first-tiktok-war/)

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA - SELECTED MARKETS

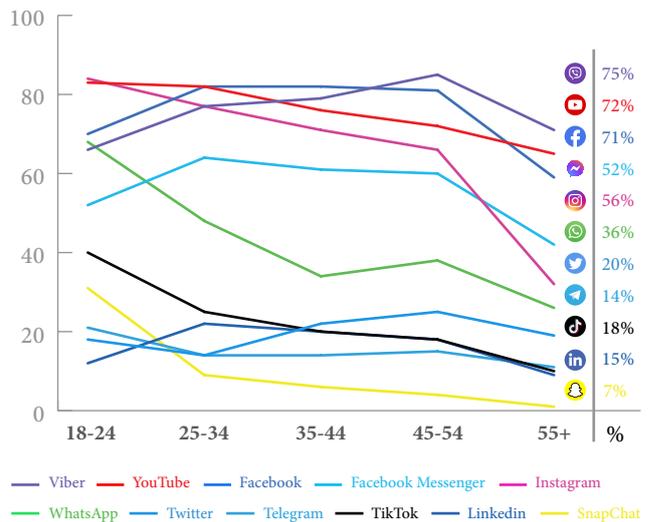


Q: Which, if any, of the following social media have you used for any purpose in the last week?

Q: Which, if any, of the following have you used for finding, reading, watching, sharing or discussing news in the last week?

People have different media habits. In Serbia, for example, women (98%) use social media more than men (92%) and they are active on more platforms on average. The greatest gender difference is noticed in the use of Instagram, which is used by 69% of women, as opposed to 41% of men. It is only with two social networking sites that the situation is reversed – Twitter (23% vs 17%) and Telegram (17% vs 10%) are used more by men. The young (18–24) stand out, since WhatsApp, Snapchat and TikTok are their social media and they use them much more than other generations, while the most popular network for this age group is Instagram (84%).

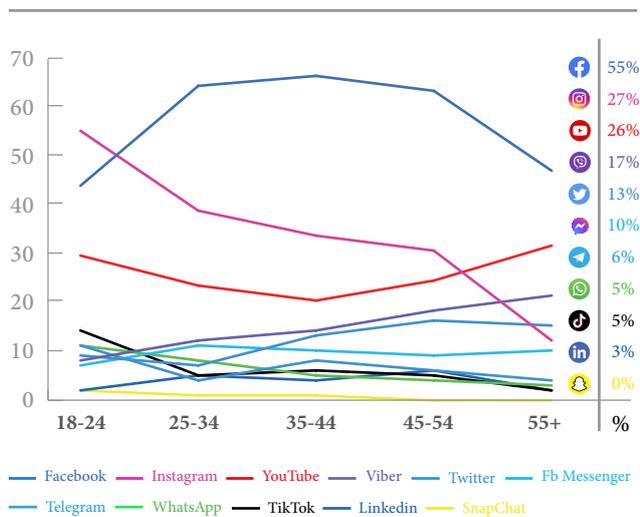
USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA - BY AGE



Q: Which, if any, of the following social media have you used for any purpose in the last week?

The fact that the citizens of Serbia use social media for news more than any other European country included in the study is also reflected in the findings regarding individual platforms. More than a half of respondents use Facebook (55%), half of that number use Instagram (27%) and YouTube (26%), while Viber (17%) is more popular than Twitter (13%). Generational differences are not that prominent, although the youngest respondents use Instagram (54%) for news more than Facebook (43%), just like they use Telegram (11%) more than Twitter (9%).

USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR ANY PURPOSE AND FOR NEWS



Q: Which, if any, of the following social media have you used for any purpose in the last week?

Q: Which, if any, of the following have you used for finding, reading, watching, sharing or discussing news in the last week?

Base: Respondents who used social media, N=1,928.

Since the content on social media and direct messaging sites and apps is personalized, there are notifications other than news that are sent and the question arises how much news, in percentages, people see on them and how they estimate that quantity. The share of news seen on social networks in comparison with the whole content presented to them is the highest on Twitter (51%), which is expected bearing in mind the image of that network and the fact that it is intensively used by journalists and politicians. Next on the list are Facebook (46%), YouTube (45%), LinkedIn (45%), Telegram (44%) and Instagram (40%).

Even though the proportion of news from media on these social networking sites varies, the dominant impression is that it is in the right measure. Depending on social media, between 70% (WhatsApp) and 84% (Telegram) of users believe that the amount of news they see is quite sufficient. This result indicates a widely spread satisfaction among the respondents regarding the amount of news they see in their feeds. The only exception is Facebook, a social network used the least for news, where the largest proportion of respondents (19%) think that they see too much news, while only 8% think that the

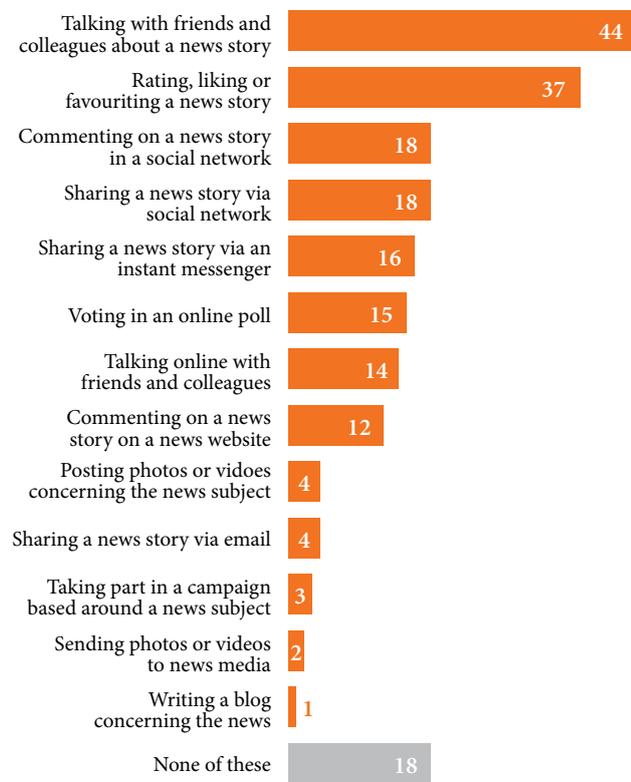
amount of news is insufficient. This finding can be interpreted as a consequence of the fact that people mainly use Facebook to keep in touch and not for news. Furthermore, those less interested in news or those wishing to avoid news might feel they are exposed to news more than they would like to, not only when it comes to Facebook, but any other social network as well.

User engagement

Although information is usually analysed in the context of passive reception of messages, news is a resource used for further interaction and participation. Data show that people most often use news as a conversation starter with people close to them (44%). A face-to-face discussion about news is much more widely spread than a conversation through any online channel. Even though there are different ways in which citizens can take part in a debate about or production of news, the fact is that people have incorporated activities that require the least engagement into their media habits. For example, during a typical week more than a third of the respondents (38%) like or respond to news with an emoticon. Almost every third citizen (29%) shares news via social networks, apps for direct messaging or email, while a quarter (24%) comment on news on social networks or websites. Men are twice more likely than women (16% vs 8%) to comment on news on a website where it was published, while women are more likely to like and share news through apps for direct messaging.

People between 45 and 54 comment on news on social networks much more often than others. This generational habit is present in almost every third person (30%) in that age category. Almost a fifth (18%) do not communicate about news in any way during a typical week.

PROPORTION WHO PARTICIPATE IN NEWS COVERAGE



Q: During an average week in which, if any, of the following ways do you share or participate in news coverage?

Journalists and social networks

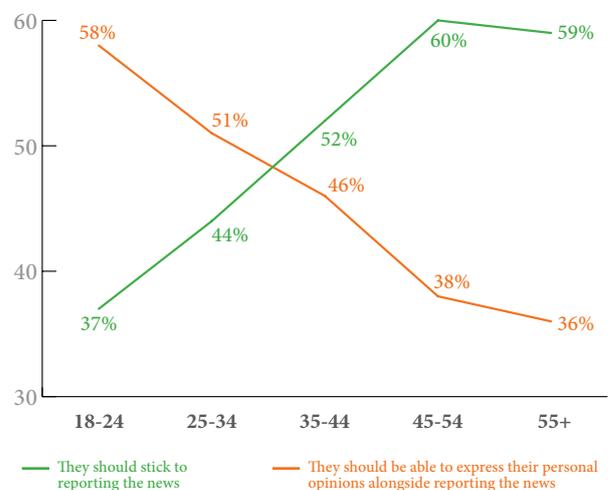
An opportunity to talk to the public directly, avoiding editorial procedures and regulations, and to achieve visibility and recognisability that has moved from media onto social media has significantly changed the professional culture of journalists. Social networks are an ambivalent environment for journalists – on the one hand, they continue to build their professional image, find leads that they later use in their reports, while, on the other, they often become exposed to threats and attacks.

Journalists in Serbia use Twitter intensively and many of them are also present on Instagram, Facebook and other social networks, just like their colleagues all over the world. In the circumstances of a growing polarization in many developed democracies, knowing that journalists’ attitudes expressed on social media can be interpreted as the attitude of the outlets, large media organizations, such as New York

Times and BBC, formulated guidelines that their employees need to follow when publishing content on social networks. Journalists are asked to refrain from publicly expressing their opinions on controversial topics or events, as well as about those they report on. Serbian outlets have not asked for anything similar.

Do citizens think journalists should report on events on social networks in the same way as they do in their outlets, and should they be allowed to express their own opinions? The findings show that the dominant attitude (54%) is still that journalists should stick to reporting the news, without providing a personal perspective. In that sense, Serbia is like most other countries included in the Reuters Institute global study. However, since the number of those who are indifferent regarding this issue is extremely low, there is a greater proportion than in other countries of those who believe that it is acceptable for journalists to express their personal attitude on social networks. In Serbia, this opinion is shared by 42% of people, in the USA that proportion is 29%, in the United Kingdom 33%, while in Australia it is 34%. There are generational differences both in Serbia and around the world: most young people believe that expressing personal views should be allowed to journalists, while older generations are mostly against it.

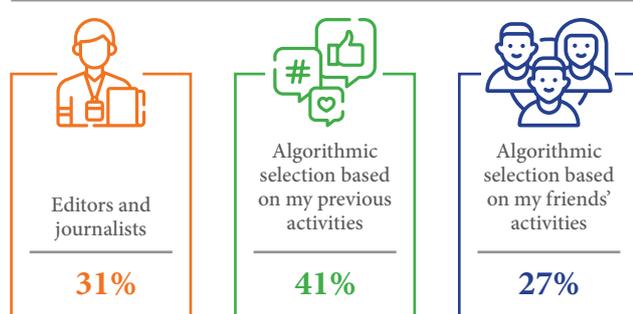
HOW SHOULD JOURNALISTS USE SOCIAL MEDIA - BY AGE



Q: Which of the following comes closest to how you think journalists should use social media like Twitter and Facebook?

When it comes to news selection and various “gatekeepers” who decide what news we will see, citizens find automatic selection based on personal activities most acceptable. There are 10% more of those who share this opinion than those who believe that following news selected by media professionals is satisfactory. The smallest share consists of those who have a positive attitude towards automatic selection based on behaviour of friends.

I THINK THAT A GOOD WAY TO KEEP UP WITH NEWS IS WHEN THEY ARE SELECTED BY



Q: I think that following news chosen by editors and journalists is a good way to reach news.

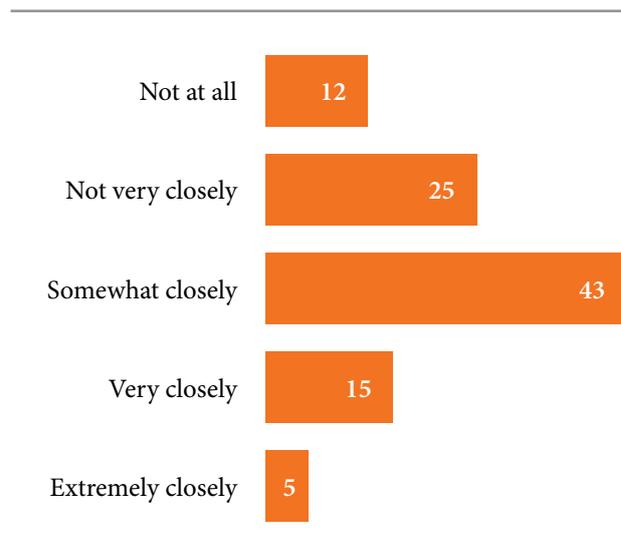
Q: Automatic selection of news based on what I previously read and watched is a good way to reach news.

Q: Automatic selection of news based on what my friends previously read and watched is a good way to reach news.

MEDIA TOPIC: WAR IN UKRAINE

Serbia has not imposed sanctions on Russia and consequently on its media, which were denied broadcasting rights by the European Union in March 2022. As a result, the citizens of Serbia could follow the *Sputnik* portal in Serbia and, as of mid-November, *Russia Today*. However, regardless of the share of citizens who receive information through these channels, this situation is an important indicator of the state policy, also reflected in the media sphere. The war in Ukraine has once again laid bare the position of Serbia based on balancing between the East and the West. The pro-Russian sentiment is strong in Serbia and opinion polls show that it has not changed significantly since the attack of Russia on Ukraine.¹⁶

PROPORTION WHO FOLLOW THE WAR IN UKRAINE



Q: How closely, if at all, are you following the current Russia-Ukraine conflict?

Almost two thirds of the respondents in Serbia (63%) follow the news about the war in Ukraine to some extent. The findings reveal that in November the interest in Serbia was lower than in March, when the global study was conducted, while the interest was higher in Germany (81%), Poland (72%), the United Kingdom (70%) and the USA (69%). Similarly, most citizens in Serbia follow what events with regard to the war in Ukraine. Such findings suggest that citizens receive a certain amount of information as part of their media consumption, but a smaller number of them read such news with extreme attention or take extra time to find out more about the events.

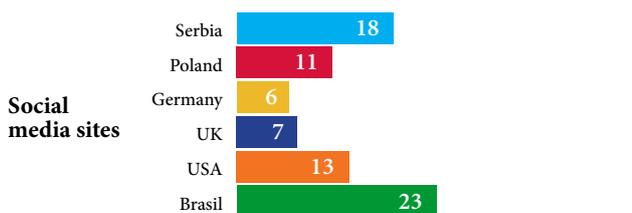
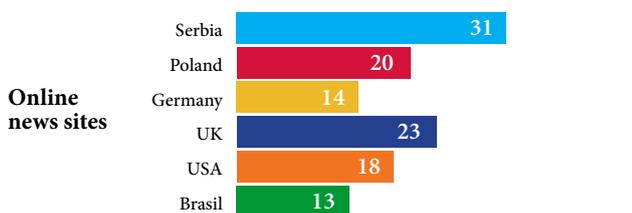
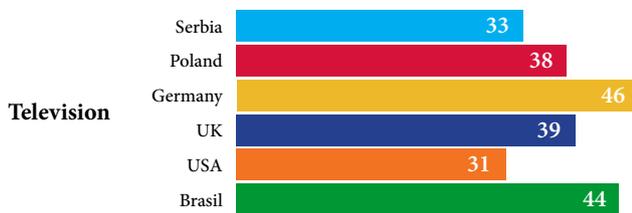
There are great gender differences when it comes to following the war, since three quarters (75%) of all men and just above a half of women (53%) follow what is going on. The young are also less interested, with around a half of the respondents aged 18–34 who follow the events occasionally, regularly or extremely actively. There are great differences when it comes to political preferences: 79% of those closer to the governing parties follow the news related to the war, as do 63% of those closer to the opposition parties and 56% of those that are neither close to the governing, nor opposition parties.

16 Ilić, Vujo & Darko Stojilović, Democracy on the margin of the war. Belgrade: Crta, 2022 bit.ly/3vfRnq8

Belgrade Center for Security Policy, “After the War in Ukraine Broke Out, the Citizens of Serbia Still Have Positive Attitude Towards Russia.” 15.12.2022 bit.ly/3jq633j

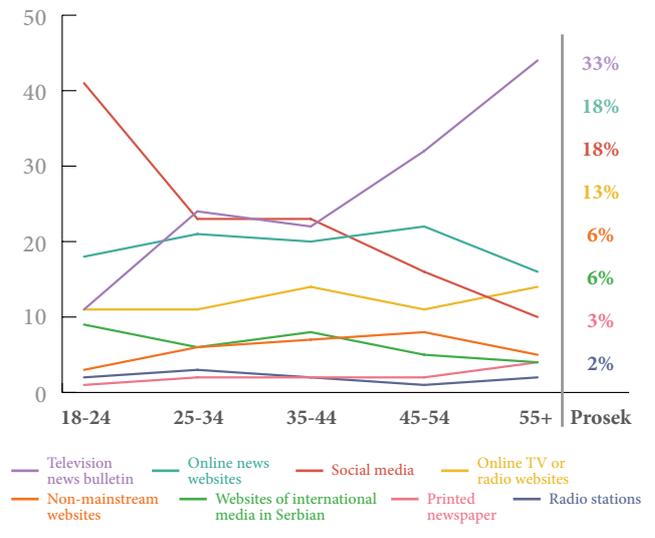
To receive information about the war in Ukraine, the citizens of Serbia mainly turn to TV news bulletins (33%), which is the same share as the one related to news in general. Even though in numerous crises the relevance of TV as a news source grows, as evidenced by the number of people who use it as the main news source in other countries, that is not the case in Serbia. However, what the findings reveal is the growth in the use of websites or applications of TV stations, which suggests that part of the audience that relies on digital sources treat information regarding a topic as important as a war conflict that come from renowned media sources as more credible than the news that appear on social networks. This is confirmed by the fact that the share of those using social networks as the main sources of news regarding the war in Ukraine and in general is lower by five percent and that the share of those relying on the websites of newspapers and radio-television stations is lower by further 5%.

MAIN SOURCES OF NEWS ON WAR IN UKRAINE - SELECTED MARKETS



Q: When it comes to the current Russia-Ukraine conflict, which one of the following sources of news, if any, are you paying most attention to?

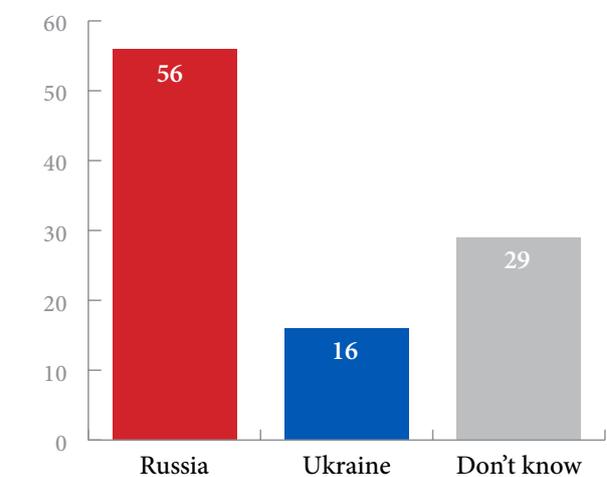
MAIN SOURCES OF NEWS ON WAR IN UKRAINE - BY AGE



Q: When it comes to the current Russia-Ukraine conflict, which one of the following sources of news, if any, are you paying most attention to?

The generation gap in terms of using social media and TV is also reflected in the use of the news about the war in Ukraine. The share of those who primarily receive information from TV is four times higher among the oldest age category (44%) than in the youngest (11%). The situation is reverse when it comes to social networks, which are the most important source for those aged 18–24 (41%), while among those older than 55 every tenth person uses this way to find information about the war.

CITIZENS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE CONFLICT



Q: If you had to choose, whose position are you more aligned with in the armed conflict?

If they had to take sides, most citizens (56%) would choose the Russian side in the conflict, and men (64%) support that position more than women (48%). Additionally, 36% of women and 21% of men do not know which side they would take.

IN REPORTING ON THE WAR IN UKRAINE, HOW ARE THE MEDIA IN SERBIA DOING THEIR JOB

In keeping up to date



In explaining the wider implications



In providing a range of different perspectives



Very bad job Fairly bad job Neither good nor bad Fairly good job Very good job Don't know

Q: Do you think the news media in Serbia have done a good job or a bad in keeping you up to date with the current Russia-Ukraine conflict?

Q: Do you think the news media in Serbia have done a good job or a bad in explaining the wider implications of the current Russia-Ukraine conflict?

Q: Do you think the news media in Serbia have done a good job or a bad in providing a range of different perspectives on the current Russia-Ukraine conflict?

The citizens are divided when it comes to evaluating the work of the media in terms of three aspects related to reporting on the conflict, so less than a third believe that the media are doing their job well or relatively well. There is a significant difference when it comes to the quality of reporting, which depends on which side in the conflict is closer to the respondents. For example, among those closer to the Ukrainian position, a small share believe that reporting is good when it comes to explaining wider implications and providing a range of different perspectives (13%) and regular reporting on the conflict (18%). On the other hand, the share of those who see reporting as good is significantly higher among those inclined towards the Russian side – 37% see the work of the media as good when it comes to explaining the wider implications and providing

different points of view, while 42% believe that the media are doing a good job when it keeping them up to date on the conflict.

The citizens of Serbia are much more critical of the media than citizens of other countries when it comes to the war in Ukraine. The general dissatisfaction with the media and low level of trust are also reflected in the assessment of quality of war reporting.

PROPORTION WHO THINK THAT MEDIA ARE DOING A GOOD JOB IN REPORTING ON THE WAR IN UKRAINE - SELECTED MARKETS



Q: Do you think the news media in your country have done a good job or a bad keeping you up to date with the current Russia-Ukraine conflict?

Q: Do you think the news media in your country have done a good job or a bad in explaining the wider implications of the current Russia-Ukraine conflict? Q: Do you think the news media in your country have done a good job or a bad in providing a range of different perspectives on the current Russia-Ukraine conflict?

MEDIA TOPIC: CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change is the greatest challenge of modern society and the scope of devastation caused by it is becoming increasingly apparent. Droughts, floods and other disasters are the central news and there are sporadic reports on the protests organized by environmental activists. However, media are still struggling with the question of how to communicate with their audiences regarding the overall process of climate

change. For example, the British *Guardian* decided a few years ago to replace the term “climate change” with “climate crisis” in order to suggest the urgency of the topic. Other outlets have opted to offer documentaries or short video content in order to explain the problem a bit more closely.

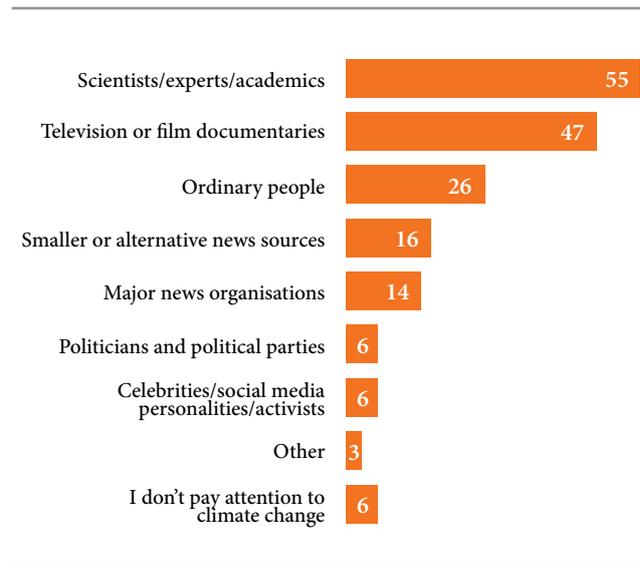
As noted in the Reuters Institute global study, climate change is perceived as an increasingly important topic. However, that trend is more common in the countries that are affected by the consequence of climate change more often and more intensively, such as Chile, Greece and Portugal.

In Serbia, two thirds (66%) of respondents believe that climate change is a serious problem and 27% of them believe that the problem is extremely serious. The problem is seen as relatively serious by 23% of citizens, while 11% believe it is not a serious problem. Bearing in mind the attitude towards climate change, it comes as no surprise that only 6% of the respondents pay no attention to information about this topic. However, it should be added that in comparison with other topics, the environment is not among the priority of the citizens, 32% of them are interested in it. This suggests that the news related to climate change are followed peripherally, as one of the news topics, and not as the main one.

The main news sources regarding climate change are scientists, experts and academicians, followed by TV and film documentaries. The share of those following politicians and political parties or celebrities and activists is very small, which is also the case in other countries. Ordinary people are a relatively frequent news source for the citizens of Serbia (26%), while the global average is only 13%. This could be a result of the fact that in Serbia climate change is less talked about by politicians and influencers, and more by people who are not widely known.

Certain generational differences can be noted. The younger population (18–34) is more inclined to follow large media organizations, alternative sources of news, celebrities and ordinary people, while those a bit older (45–54) turn more towards scientists and experts, as well as towards TV and film documentaries.

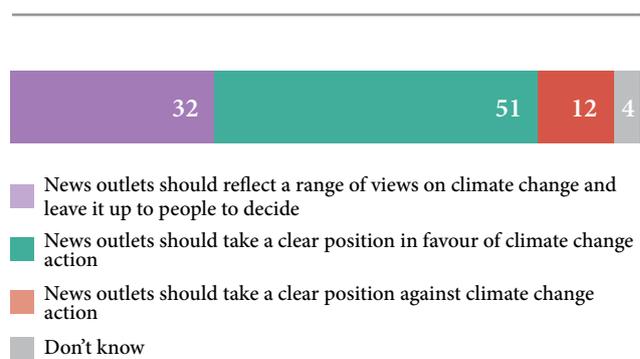
PROPORTION WHO FOLLOW CERTAIN SOURCES ON CLIMATE CHANGE NEWS



Q: When it comes to climate change news, which of the following sources, if any, do you pay most attention to?

In the context of denying climate change, it is interesting to look at the expectations of citizens regarding the media. More than a half of the respondents believe that the media should take a clear position in favour of climate change action, i.e. to prioritize reporting related to pointing out problems and suggesting solutions. A neutral position, i.e. presenting a range of views towards climate change, is expected by just under a third of the respondents, while every tenth person believes that the media should take a position against climate change action.

HOW SHOULD THE MEDIA COVER CLIMATE CHANGE?



Q: Thinking about the way news outlets cover climate change, which of the following statements best describes your view?

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