

The media routines young people develop now will help determine their media behaviour in the future. Young people are using traditional media less and less, and social media more and more. Also for news. The Dutch Media Authority conducted research on the consequences of this for the use of journalism. This document contains the main conclusions and recommendations.

## Conclusions



### 78% of young people use social media to keep informed of what's going on

• The fact that messages automatically pop up here plays an important role. This habit is likely to remain and also applies to those in their twenties and young people who actively follow the news. Young people also use news websites and apps (48%), but encounter news most often on social media.



**No crisis of trust in news** • 94% of young people take a basic attitude of trust towards the news. Only 6% say they distrust the news. This percentage is similar among young and older people. Moreover, the vast majority of young people think it is important for journalism to strive for reliable information and for journalism to be available through social media.



### Youth-focused approach increases interest in news

• While young people have less interest in general news (politics, economics, domestic and foreign news), interest rises if the news has an angle relevant to this group. News interest also increases with age. However, it does lag behind among the practically educated and young people from families where news is less prevalent.



### Awareness and reputation of journalism brands is good

• Young people trust the well-known news brands they come across or use. Public broadcaster NOS is generally trusted by 85% of its users, and private news brands NU.nl and RTL Nieuws both by 71%. For social media channels that do not make news themselves, but distribute and often adapt it, the percentages are lower. @Cestmocro is considered 'to be trusted' by 33% of those who come across or use it, and @RapNewsTV by 18%.



### NOS with youth approach on social media, other news brands lag behind

• The youth-focused channel NOS Stories has a total of 1.1 million followers on Instagram, of which about 630,000 are between 13 and 24 years old. The non-journalistic Cestmocro is just slightly bigger on this platform. Overall, 91% of young people encounter at least one Dutch news organisation on social media. Without the NOS, this drops to 43%. More than half of young people therefore do not encounter other news brands on social media. The fact that these brands are hardly present there with an approach aimed at young people is a major reason for this.



### Revenue model poses bottleneck

• This means there is a challenge for news organisations to reach young people with journalistic offerings. NOS shows that breaking with established news conventions and using social media are necessary to be successful with young people. Yet, news brands are holding back on social media. An important bottleneck to achieve the necessary renewal are the revenue models. Private news brands earn from subscriptions or advertising through their own channels. But on social media, mainly the platform earns from the news offerings, not the creators.



### Big tech companies largely determine what we see

• To stay informed, social media are the main source. For more information and checking whether something is correct, most young people (and adults) turn to search engines. This creates a heavy reliance on big tech companies, both for access to news and for other information that is important for free opinion formation. After all, big tech algorithms determine who sees what news on social media and what information is offered first through search engines.

### Who participated in the study?

The Dutch Media Authority conducted large-scale questionnaire research among young people (16-24 years old) and older people (40-65 years old). A total of 2,010 young people and 497 older people were surveyed by market research firm Ipsos I&O in March 2024.

We also mapped the presence of news brands and other initiatives that spread or deepen news on different social media. Finally, we engaged with newsmakers about the choices they make around presence within social media and young people as a target audience and how these come about.



# Recommendations

In our view, a pluralistic media landscape where multiple independent news editors do their work is indispensable. With a generation that is mainly informed by social media about what is happening in the world and news brands that have a limited presence on social media with a youth-focused approach, an important precondition for the vitality of our democracy is in danger of being compromised. How do we turn this tide? The recommendations from the Dutch Media Authority are listed below.

1. News organization should develop an approach to make news visible, findable and recognisable to young people. Breaking with journalistic conventions and using social media is necessary to do so.

Making reliable, independent and pluralistic news more accessible to young people is essential. This currently requires presence of professional news brands with a youth-focused approach on social media, as this is the main way for young people to stay informed. Young people can thus experience the value of journalism in their own lives and as socially engaged citizens.

2. Explore the possibility of (temporary) news industry incentives for initiatives specifically aimed at young people.

Social media currently lacks a revenue model for news organisations. It may therefore be necessary to support the sector temporarily, giving it the opportunity to develop futureproof revenue models. Consider tax incentives or a targeted subsidy approach for the private sector. Ultimately, the private news sector should remain an economically healthy sector and structural dependence on subsidies should be avoided.

3. Regulate tech companies as soon as possible so that news becomes more prominent on offer and new revenue models for the news sector can emerge.

The increased importance of digital media in general and social media in particular calls for more grip on the big tech companies. It is high time to treat social media and search machines the same as television package providers such as Ziggo and KPN, which are subject to 'must carry' rules. Grip requires agreements between news organisations and public broadcasters with platforms on the one hand and legislation, regulation and supervision on the other. Current (European) laws and regulations offer starting points, but require more precise definitions and a broader scope to make this possible.

4. Encourage news literacy among young people, with an extra focus on young people with practical education.

News literacy means that young people learn to recognise how professionally made news can be distinguished from other forms of reporting in terms of reliability and truth-telling. In this way, the role of journalism in Dutch society is given more emphasis than the fear of disinformation. If the latter gets the upper hand, it can lead to the undermining of trust in all news organisations. And it is precisely trust in journalism that is important for a functioning democracy. Here, extra attention should be paid to young people with practical education.

This document contains an abridged account of the main findings, conclusions and recommendations. For further explanation and background, please refer to the [longer summary in English](#) or the comprehensive research report in Dutch.