

Half of online users get news from Facebook and other social platforms

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Credit: University of Oxford

A wave of disruption has hit news organisations around the world, with potentially profound consequences both for publishers and the future of news production, according to a report by Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.

Its fifth Digital News Report says the combined effects of the rise of social platforms, an accelerating move to [mobile devices](#) and a growing rejection by consumers of online advertising has undermined many of

the [business models](#) that support quality news. The report shows how third-party platforms such as Facebook have become destinations for people looking for news in the last year, with initiatives such as Instant Articles and distributed native video also playing an important role.

Reuters Institute Director of Research, Rasmus Kleis Nielsen, says: 'As people increasingly access news via third party platforms, it will become harder and harder for most publishers to stand out from the crowd, connect directly with users, and make money. This development will leave some winners and many losers.'

The report, based on survey research conducted in 26 countries, also reveals the extent of ad-blocking around the world, while progress towards getting consumers to pay for online news remains slow. Together with falls in print circulation and advertising in many countries, the report documents how these trends are leading to job losses, consolidation and moves towards online-only operations. Despite this, the report highlights the continuing importance of a number of 'anchor news brands' with a strong journalistic track record, which are valued by users as a critical source of trusted news.

Half (51%) of all online users across the 26 countries say they use [social media](#) as a source of news each week. Around one in ten (12%) now say this is their main source. The report shows the increasingly influential role played by Facebook in the distribution of online news with 44% using the network to find, read, watch, share, or comment on the news each week – more than twice that of its nearest rival. You Tube (19%) also plays a role in some countries, while Twitter (10%), despite its business problems, remains important for those who are heavily into keeping up with the news. Social media is significantly more important for women (who are also less likely to go directly to a news website or app) and for the young. More than a quarter of 18–24 year olds say social media (28%) is their main source of news – more than television

(24%) for the first time.

The growth of news that is accessed and increasingly consumed via social networks, portals and mobile apps means that the originating news brand gets clearly noticed less than half the time in countries like the UK, and Canada, says the report.

Over half (53%) of all respondents now say they use a smartphone to access news, with some of the highest levels in Sweden (69%), Korea (66%), and Switzerland (61%). Average weekly usage has grown from 44% to 48% in the US and from 42 to 46% in the UK where the number saying they mainly use a mobile device for news has overtaken computers and laptops for the first time. By contrast, weekly tablet usage for news has fallen in the UK with growth slowing elsewhere.

A significant proportion comes into contact with news via a smartphone first thing in the morning (16% in the UK and 17% in the US), rather than using a TV, radio or newspaper. Of these almost half of Americans (48%) and a third of Britons (33%) access news first via social media rather than a news app or website.

Lead author Nic Newman points out: 'The move to smartphone goes hand-in-hand with the move to distributed content. Mobile users increasingly find [news](#) coming to them through social media feeds, alerts and notifications.'

More information: The Digital News Report 2016:
digitalnewsreport.org/

Provided by University of Oxford

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