

# News consumption patterns in Iceland

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## Abstract

News consumption has changed dramatically in the digital age, becoming increasingly complicated and fragmented. In this study, I analyse news consumption patterns in Iceland, drawing on data from a survey conducted in 2017, and compare it with news consumption in other Nordic countries. It is the first such study in Iceland in the digital age. The findings demonstrate that news are widely consumed by the general public, as in general in the Nordic region. Online sites are Icelanders' most popular main source of news, followed by television and then social media. Legacy media are still most people's primary source of news, even if they are accessed on new platforms. Like in other Nordic countries, a small minority interacts with news online.

**Keywords:** news consumption, cross-media use, news participation, media systems, Iceland

## Introduction

The news media environment has become increasingly complicated and fragmented in the twenty-first century, as the information and outlets available to people have multiplied in the digital era. The supply of news is greater than ever, and it is always available a click away. In this study, I analyse the patterns of news media use in Iceland and place it in an international, mainly Nordic, context. It is the first study of news consumption in Iceland in the digital era and the first comprehensive study of news consumption across media outlets and platforms in the country.

Research indicates that the news environment of today is a multiplatform world, where people select and mix content from a range of platforms and outlets, variously formulated as cross-media use, media choice, media repertoires, and a range of other terms (e.g., Helles et al., 2015). The balance is shifting towards online news, and social media is becoming increasingly important as a source of news. However, traditional media platforms remain critically important, especially television and legacy media organisations (media established in the analogue era) have successfully established themselves online (Newman et al., 2017). Research also suggests that the democratic potentials of interactive digital technology have yet to materialise. In most countries, a minority actively interacts with news and participates in public discussion online (Hölig et al., 2016).

Research has long demonstrated that people's news use and practice differ according to demographic factors like age, sex, education, and income, and that seems to still be the case in the new media landscape (e.g., Bakker & de Vreese, 2011; Blekesaune et al., 2012; Boulianne, 2015; Dimitrova et al., 2014; Holt et al., 2013; Newman et al., 2017). Recently, growing attention has been paid to possible relations between media systems and media use, and research indicates that the structural and institutional context in which media and news are consumed – as well as individual factors and technological affordances – affects people's media use and practices (Adoni et al., 2017; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Helles et al., 2015; Horowitz & Napoli, 2014; Hölig et al., 2016; Meilán & Wu, 2017; Peruško, 2017).

Patterns of news consumption are constantly changing as more communication platforms are placed in users' hands. This underscores the importance of empirically tracking how people use and interact with news (Hölig et al., 2016; Jensen & Mortensen, 2016; Napoli, 2011). I take an empirical perspective on news consumption in Iceland in this study and analyse the news use patterns of Icelanders in the digital age based on a survey conducted in 2017. The findings are compared to news consumption patterns in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden. Comparable data on news media consumption in the Faroe Islands and Greenland were not available.

In the first section of this article, I give an overview of recent literature on news media use. The second section describes the methodology used, after which the third section presents the results of the study. In the concluding section, I discuss the findings and the implications of changing media patterns.

## **Trends in news consumption**

Contemporary news media have gone through dramatic changes in the last decades, as digital technology advances with seemingly increasing speed. News consumption has become more fragmented and complex (Van Damme et al., 2017), and recently, more attention has been paid to this shift in news consumption patterns and its implications (Jensen et al., 2016; Napoli, 2011; Newman et al., 2016; Wolf & Schnauber, 2015). The media is of course no stranger to technological changes. As Lee-Wright and colleagues (2012) argue, media history is a history of constant change and innovation. Similarly, van Dijk (2006: 4) notes that “several communication revolutions have taken place” in the history of the media. That said, it is hardly contested that changes in the news media environment in the last decade or so have been considerable and very fast (Shapiro, 2014). Helles and colleagues (2015) note that research has struggled to keep up with the scale and depth of changing practices of media use.

In today's media landscape, people have an almost infinite array of platforms and content options to choose from. News is consumed across various platforms and media outlets, and scholars have increasingly conceptualised and researched media use as inherently cross-media (Hasebrink & Domeyer, 2012; Kim, 2016; Schröder, 2015). Research suggests that most people use multiple sources to access media content, mixing off- and online platforms, legacy media, and newer online-only outlets (Newman et al., 2016; Papathanassopoulos et al., 2013; Trilling & Schoenbach, 2013; Webster & Ksiazek, 2012; Yuan, 2011).

A recurrent theme in the discussion about the implication of digital media is whether new digital media will “displace, replace, or supplement ‘old’ legacy media” (Jensen & Mortensen, 2016: 6). Existing research indicates that traditional platforms remain a crucial part of people’s news diet (Nielsen & Schröder, 2014; Papathanassopoulos et al., 2013). However, news consumption patterns change quickly. The balance is shifting towards online platforms; television is, for example, less central in most countries than it was just a few years ago (Newman et al., 2020). Much of the news consumed online, however, comes from platforms that are offsprings of established newspapers or broadcasters (Newman et al., 2016). In the US, the gap between online news users and those using television to access news has been steadily narrowing (Gottfried & Shearer, 2017).

Also, social media are becoming increasingly important as a gateway to news. Newman and colleagues (2017: 10–11) argue that the biggest change in news consumption in the past few years “has been the growth of news accessed via social media sites”. Hölig and colleagues (2016) also note how the rapid rise of social media impacts news consumption. Facebook has become the dominant social media platform – both in general and for news in particular – in most European countries and the US (Jensen & Mortensen, 2016; Newman et al., 2016).

Despite the possibilities of the interactivity provided by digital media, participation in and interaction with the news appears to be activities reserved for a minority of users. Jens and Mortensen (2016) caution against exaggerating the democratic and participatory potential of the changing news environment. Studies across countries have demonstrated that face-to-face conversation is the most widespread form of communication about news (Jensen, 2016). Newman and colleagues (2016) note that even though the use of social media for news has increased, sharing and commenting has remained broadly at the same level for some years, and there are even signs of a decline in some countries.

Research consistently shows a significant user age difference in the platforms and sources accessed for news. Younger people prefer to go online and to social media for news, whereas older generations stick to their habits of watching television, listening to radio, and reading newspapers (e.g., Bakker & de Vreese, 2011; Hölig et al., 2016; Newman et al., 2017; Tammi, 2016; Trilling & Schoenbach, 2013; Westlund & Weibull, 2013). Other sociodemographic differences, such as gender, education, and income, also influence news consumption patterns. Men in general access news more frequently than women, and women use social media more than men. People with higher formal education access news more frequently than those without, and likewise in higher income groups compared to lower income groups (Blekesaune et al., 2012; Boulianne, 2015; Dimitrova et al., 2014; Holt et al., 2013; Taipale, 2013).

## Media system effects on news consumption

Technological affordances can enable or constrain certain kinds of media use, but usage is likewise enabled or constrained by the institutional structure of the media system in which the media practices take place (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Hölig et al., 2016; Meilán & Wu, 2017; Peruško et al., 2015). Scholars have stressed a need for an updated understanding of media systems in relation to digital media practices and argued that an analysis of media systems must incorporate both access and usage (Meilán & Wu,

2017; Peruško, 2017). Several researchers have built upon and expanded Hallin and Mancini's (2004) study of media systems in Western Europe and North America with regards to news consumption (e.g., Hölig et al., 2016; Meilán & Wu, 2017; Nielsen & Schröder, 2014; Peruško et al., 2015). Hallin and Mancini's study did demonstrate large differences in newspaper readership in the three media systems they identified, with an unequal consumption of public information in the polarised pluralist countries, whereas democratic corporatist countries had a culture of a more equal and "heavy consumption of information about public affairs" (Hallin & Mancini, 2004: 298). Their main focus was, however, not on news consumption, and the impact of the digital revolution on media systems was not addressed.

Peruško and colleagues (2015) proposed a theoretical model to describe contemporary media systems that includes emergent digital media and globalisation trends and moves beyond the narrow focus on news media in Hallin and Mancini's model. They built their model on four dimensions which define today's digital media systems, including institutional inclusiveness, the digital media market, media culture, and globalisation (for elaboration on definition and operationalisation, see Adoni et al., 2017). Data from 33 European countries were collected, including Iceland. Five models were identified through cluster analysis: the inclusive cluster (to which Iceland belongs), the convergent cluster, the peripheral cluster, the non-inclusive cluster, and Israel. In the second step, the relations between the models, or clusters, and audience data from nine countries were analysed (Iceland was not included in the audience study). The results support the explanatory power of structural aspects at the macro-institutional level for audience choices, and in the case of online news consumption, "structural factors seem to explain more variance than individual factors" (Peruško et al., 2015: 360).

Similarly, Meilán and Wu's (2017) study of news consumption patterns in 14 European countries demonstrated that different media systems have distinct patterns of both newspaper and Internet use. The findings showed that in north-central European nations, particularly the Nordic countries, media use was more widespread than other European countries. Hölig and colleagues compared eight countries based on Brüggemann and colleagues' (2014) four empirical types of Western media systems and concluded that "contextual variation in the kind of media system in which people live also influences how much news they access" (Hölig et al., 2016: 116). In countries of the northern type (Denmark and Finland), people use news more often than in countries like France and Spain, which belong to the southern media system type. Southern-type countries, on the other hand, proved to interact more with the news than countries belonging to other media system types (Hölig et al., 2016; Nielsen & Schröder, 2014; Westlund & Weibull, 2013).

## **The Icelandic media landscape**

Iceland is the smallest of the Nordic states, with a population of 360,000 (for more on the country's history and political system, see Ravn-Høygaard et al., this issue). The Nordic countries have common historical roots and their development is deeply intertwined (Strömbäck et al., 2008; Weibull, 2009), and Iceland shares many institutions and traditions with the other Nordic countries. Iceland has a long history of press freedom, a tradition of widespread newspaper reading, and strong public service broadcasting. Two

national daily newspapers are published in the country, two weeklies and one biweekly. Free newspapers have had a somewhat uniquely strong position in Iceland (Bakker, 2013). Legacy media outlets have all established themselves online, and the most-read online news sites are offsprings of print news organisations. Online news sites with no links to legacy media also play an increasingly prominent part in the provision of daily news. There are several regional and local papers in Iceland, but most of them are small, and local media has always been weak in Iceland (Guðmundsson, 2006; Statistics Iceland, n.d.-a). Like the other Nordic countries, Iceland is a technologically advanced, high-income country and a stable Western democracy. It has been at the forefront in the development of information technology infrastructure (International Telecommunication Union, 2017), and Internet access is almost universal (Internet World Stats, 2017). Its media system has, though, in some aspects, differed considerably from its Nordic counterparts. State intervention has been limited to the public broadcasting system and the press left entirely to market forces (Karlsson, 2004). Some scholars have suggested that Iceland is better described as a hybrid or mixed case, rather than as a member of the Nordic media model (Guðmundsson, 2013; Jóhannsdóttir, 2019).

It is important to understand how people consume news because of the vital role news plays in democratic societies. Studies have consistently shown a positive correlation between news consumption and civic engagement and political participation (e.g., Aalberg et al., 2010; Fenton, 2010; Lee-Wright et al., 2012; McNair, 2012; Papathanasopoulos et al., 2013). News consumption in Iceland has not been studied much, and not at all in the digital era.

This study aims to map and analyse news consumption in Iceland. The overarching research question is twofold: What are the main news consumption patterns of Icelanders in the digital age, and how do they compare with news consumption in the other Nordic countries? To answer this, the study addresses several sub-questions about the spread of news consumption among the general populace aged 18 and older, the impact of demographic factors on news consumption, the sources and platforms people use for consuming news, and the extent to which they interact with the news.

## Methodology

To analyse the news consumption habits of Icelanders, a survey was conducted in the summer of 2017 among a representative sample of the general populace aged 18 and older. Changing news habits is a global phenomenon. To place Iceland in a context of international trends for comparison with other countries, I obtained permission to use the questionnaire from Reuters Digital News Research (RDNR), as well as access to data from all participation countries. RDNR is the world's largest comparative international study of changing news habits (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, n.d.), and the 2017 survey included 36 countries, among them all the Nordic countries except Iceland, the Faroe Islands, and Greenland. The Icelandic survey was conducted by the Social Science Research Institute (SSRI) at the University of Iceland. The questionnaire was translated into Icelandic, in dialogue with fellow researchers and staff at the SSRI.

As in RDNR's 36 country surveys (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, n.d.), this survey was conducted using an established online panel. It is run by the SSRI, and the panel is based on the national registry and is representative of the total population

aged 18 and over. The survey was administered to 2,000 people from the panel in late June 2017, and as the response rate was not considered sufficient, 500 more people from the panel were added to the sample. The survey was closed in mid-September 2017, with a final response rate of 47 per cent. The data were weighted based on census-accepted data, such as age, gender, and education, to ensure the results represent the population of the country.

An online survey will under-represent the consumption habits of people who are not online; however, access to and the use of the Internet in Iceland is almost universal (Internet World Stats, 2017; Statistics Iceland, n.d.-b). Online surveys are also not suitable for all purposes, but as this is a study of the use of and attitudes towards digital news and how online and offline news are used together, an online approach is considered an appropriate methodology (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, n.d.). As with all surveys, one must also bear in mind that respondents tend to over-report their news consumption. Social desirability bias and the fact that people rely on memories of past use mean that surveys may not always provide an accurate picture of people's actual news use (Prior, 2009).

The data were entered into SPSS and analysed through frequency calculations and selected cross-tabulations. The appropriate statistical tests were used to assess significance in the cross-tabs, and ANOVA was used to determine the significance of the mean difference, when relevant. Regression analysis was used to examine the interaction between demographic variables and news consumption.

## Findings

Icelanders appear to be very interested in news. A majority of respondents (61%) reported being extremely or very interested in news, as do people in the other Nordic countries (from 54% in Denmark to 71% in Finland). The average among the countries in the RDNR study – excluding the Nordic countries – was 48 per cent. Numerous studies have demonstrated that socioeconomic characteristics influence news interest and consumption (e.g., Boulianne, 2015; Dimitrova et al., 2014; Holt et al., 2013; Newman et al., 2017), and Iceland is no exception. In Table 1, a logistic regression model is fitted with the outcome variable, interest in news. The intercept is an individual with primary education and low income.

**Table 1** Individual factors influencing news interest

	Estimate	Conf. low	Conf. high	p-value
(Intercept)	-0.438	-1.605	0.758	.465
Age	0.042	0.024	0.061	.000
Tables	0.698	-0.107	1.463	.079
Tertiary education	1.313	0.408	2.196	.004
Gender (2)*	-0.172	-0.808	0.449	.590
Medium income	0.616	-0.084	1.310	.082
High income	0.493	-0.451	1.489	.315

\*1 = male; 2 = female.

Table 1 shows that the relationship between age and education and interest in news is strong and significant. Older persons are more interested in news than younger people, and those with a university degree expressed higher interest in news than those with only primary education. People with high or medium income seem to be slightly more interested in news than people with a low income and low education, but the relationship is not significant. Women appear slightly less interested in news than men, but the relationship is weak and not significant. It is also worth noting that one in ten said they are not very or not at all interested in news, a considerably higher proportion than, for example, in Finland (3%) and Norway (4%). This is also age related, as 55 per cent of those younger than 45 years old said they are very or extremely interested in news, compared with 66 per cent of those 45 years and older ( $p < .001$ ). And 15 per cent of the younger half said they are not very or not at all interested in news, compared with only five per cent of those older ( $p < .001$ ).

Turning to the practices of accessing news, Icelanders are enthusiastic news consumers, in league with the Swedes and well above the average of the RDNR countries (see Table 2).

**Table 2** *People accessing news several times a day, by country*

	Percentage
Iceland	87
Denmark	68
Finland	77
Norway	72
Sweden	85
RDNR (Nordic excl.)	65

Studies have shown that self-expressed interest in news is the strongest predictor of news use, and age and gender have also been related to how frequently people access news (e.g., Hölig et al., 2016). Table 3 shows that there is a significant relationship between self-expressed interest in news and how often Icelanders access news. The relationship between frequency of news access and gender is significant, but the age effect is not. In Table 4, a logistic regression model is applied to analyse the relationship further. The intercept is a male extremely or very interested in news.

**Table 3** *Frequency of news access by interest, age, and gender (per cent)*

	Frequently	Seldom	<i>p</i> -value
Interest in news			< .001
extremely/very interested	71	27	
somewhat interested	26	48	
limited/no interest	3	25	
Age (mean (SD))			= .132
Gender (2)*			< .001

\*1 = male; 2 = female.

**Table 4** *Impact of news interest, age, and gender on news access*

	Estimate	Conf. low	Conf. high	p-value
(Intercept)	3.720	2.937	4.542	.000
Somewhat interested	-1.474	-1.913	-1.048	.000
Limited/no interest	-3.012	-3.615	-2.423	.000
Age (mean (SD))	0.006	0.018	0.006	.316
Gender (2)*	0.838	-1.266	0.427	.000

\*1 = male; 2 = female.

The findings show that the more interested in news people say they are, the more often they reportedly access news. Women seem to access news less frequently than men. These findings are in tune with the existing literature, though the lack of an age effect is somewhat surprising, as younger people express less interest in news than those older (seen in Table 1). Younger people's extensive use of online news and social media may provide an explanation for this, something discussed further below.

It is worth noting that there are never fewer than 80 per cent reporting accessing news several times a day in any gender, age, education, or income group. In this respect, Iceland is similar to the other Nordic countries, which studies have shown to be characterised by widespread news consumption (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Hölig et al., 2016; Meilán & Wu, 2017).

### *New versus old media platforms*

Television is the platform most used as a source of news in Iceland, with online sites not far behind (see Table 5). In a Nordic comparison, Icelanders appear to be more frequent users of social media for news. Newspapers are also frequently used (57%), just like in Finland (49%), and more often than in Norway (39%) and Sweden (36%). When it comes to accessing news in printed newspapers, Denmark seems to be the outlier. This was also the case in an earlier study by Peruško and colleagues (2015).

**Table 5** *Use of platforms to access news in the previous week, by country (per cent)*

	Iceland	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	RDNR*
Television	77.0	71.6	73.4	68.5	69.5	73.2
Online news	74.4	70.5	82.0	75.8	77.5	67.8
Social media	66.4	54.4	46.7	55.0	53.8	57.0
Print newspaper	56.9	25.6	47.4	36.5	38.9	39.5

\*Nordic countries excluded in the RDNR average.

When respondents were asked about which platform their main source of news was, a somewhat different picture emerged (see Table 6). Like in the other Nordic countries, except Denmark, online news holds the top seat, with television news following. In all five Nordic countries, the proportion of people using online news is considerably higher than on average in the other countries investigated in the RDNR. In Denmark, Finland,



Norway, and Sweden, the gap between television and online news is also narrower than in other countries, which is not the case in Iceland. The gap is in the opposite direction of RDNR countries (excluding the Nordic countries), with half of Icelanders using online news as a main source and only 28 per cent using television.

**Table 6** *Use of platforms as main source to access news, by country (per cent)*

	Iceland	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	RDNR*
Television	28.1	43.9	36.6	39.2	33.2	44.8
Online news	47.9	36.8	42.7	43.3	44.9	29.3
Social media	13.9	11.7	8.7	11.8	11.6	16.8
Print newspaper	10.1	7.6	12.1	5.7	10.3	9.2

\* Nordic countries excluded in the RDNR average.

Age is the most decisive factor when it comes to the use of new platforms. Younger age groups use online news sites and social media far more than those older, both in general and as a main platform for news access, as is the case in the other Nordic countries. Table 7 shows the mean age of users of different platforms as a main source of access to news, applying Anova linear model (95% confidence interval).

**Table 7** *Use of platforms as a main source of news access, by age*

	Mean age	Conf. low	Conf. high
Television	61.27	59.54	63.00
Online news	45.06	43.75	46.37
Social media	42.92	40.48	45.35
Print newspaper	59.27	56.40	62.15

Comment: 95% confidence interval.

Table 7 shows that people who rely on social media as their main source or platform of access to news are, on average, the youngest, while people who mainly use television news are the oldest. Further statistical analysis by fitting Anova to the linear regression model found a significant age difference between some groups, depending on their main sources of news (see Table 8). Using the Tukey-method to find means that are significantly different from each other, the groups yielded the following results ( $p < .005$ ).

**Table 8** *Average age difference between users of platforms as main sources of news access*

	Mean difference	Conf. low	Conf. high	p-value
Printed newspaper–Online news	14.21	10.07	18.35	0
Television–Online news	16.20	13.36	19.05	0
Printed newspaper–Social media	-16.35	-21.29	-11.41	0
Television–Social media	18.35	14.43	22.27	0

The table shows that people who use television as their main platform to access news are, on average, 18 years older than those who mainly use social media for accessing news and 16 years older than those who rely on online sites. The findings show that in all age groups, traditional platforms are used to access news by around one in four, or more. Results do, however, suggest that online news sites and social media could be replacing print and broadcasting news as a main source of news. Only among those aged 55 and older does the majority use traditional platforms as their main news source.

However, whether or not old platforms are being replaced is one thing. Whether people are turning away from legacy news outlets and accessing news and information from alternative sources instead is a different question. The findings strongly suggest that legacy Icelandic news media are dominant in Icelanders' news consumption. A total of 97 per cent of respondents in the Icelandic survey said they access online news sites that are offsprings of either legacy broadcasting or print media. This is very high, even in a Nordic comparison; in Denmark, 69 per cent access online sites of legacy media, in Norway 74 per cent, in Sweden 75 per cent, and in Finland 80 per cent.

On average, people access news on eight different media outlets during a typical week. The only age difference of statistical significance is between those under 55 years old and those 55 years old and older, with the latter using fewer media outlets to access news. In Iceland, 61 per cent of respondents reported using seven or more sources to access news in an average week, compared to 39 per cent in Sweden, 46 per cent in Denmark, 48 per cent in Norway, and 49 per cent in Finland.

**Table 9** *Participation in news, by country (per cent)*

	Iceland	Denmark	Finland	Norway	Sweden	RDNR*
Talk with friends & colleagues about a news story (face to face)	61	48	39	44	49	36
Talk online with friends & colleagues about a news story (e.g., by e-mail, social media, or instant messenger)	25	16	15	18	14	18
Share a news story via social network (e.g., Facebook or Twitter)	23	20	18	21	22	27
Vote in an online poll via a news site or social network	18	11	12	15	14	18
Rate, like, or favourite a news story	12	19	15	10	11	21
Comment on a news story in a social network (e.g., Facebook or Twitter)	7	11	13	16	18	20
Post or send a news-related picture or video to a social network site or news website	6	6	6	7	7	11
Share a news story via e-mail	5	6	6	8	7	13
Take part in a campaign or group based around a news subject	5	2	4	5	5	6
Comment on a news story on a news website	4	5	7	8	7	10
Write a blog on a news or political issue	1	1	1	2	1	3
None of these	23	32	36	32	31	27

\*Nordic countries excluded in the RDNR tally.

Almost everyone in Iceland is on social media (93%). Facebook is by far the most popular platform (used by 87%), with Snapchat second (48%), followed closely by YouTube (47%). Instagram is in fourth place (25%), followed by Twitter (12%). Facebook is by far most widely used in connection to news; 81 per cent say they use it to find, read, watch, listen to, share, or discuss news. Several studies have shown that northern Europeans are less likely than southerners to interact with the news in this way (Hölig et al., 2016; Newman et al., 2017; Peruško et al., 2015), and Icelanders are no exception to this rule. People in Iceland are heavy consumers of news and, as Table 9 shows, they like to talk to about news, but mostly in private settings, such as face to face or privately online. Like others in the Nordic countries, a minority interacts with the news.

## Conclusion

In this study, I have analysed the patterns of news media use in Iceland and placed them in an international, mainly Nordic, context. The findings suggest many similarities between news use patterns in Iceland and the bigger Nordic countries, but also point to some differences.

### *Widespread, equal news consumption with limited interaction*

The findings show that news is widely consumed in Iceland, irrespective of age, gender, education, or income. In this respect, Iceland is similar to the other Nordic countries, which are characterised by widespread news consumption (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Hölig et al., 2016; Meilán & Wu, 2017).

Even though the Icelandic media system differs from the media systems of the four bigger Nordic countries in many respects (Jóhannsdóttir & Ólafsson, 2018), it shares with them a tradition of widespread newspaper reading and a strong public service broadcasting, which contributes to a culture of widespread news use. This continues to be true in the new digital media landscape. Like their Nordic cousins, Icelanders also appear reluctant to embrace the participatory potential of digital media, though they are at the same time enthusiastic users of the Internet and social media. Both these findings suggest the structural and institutional context in which media and news are consumed affects people's media use and practices, as well as individual factors and technological affordances.

### *New platforms taking over*

News consumption in Iceland is a cross-media experience, and people access news both online and offline. The findings suggest that newer platforms (online and social media) are taking over as people's main news source. Television has lost its centrality, to the benefit of online platforms, and is now in second place as people's main access to news, with social media very close behind. Iceland and Finland are the only Nordic countries where print is used to access news by around half of the adult population. In Iceland's case, it is likely that the strong position of free papers provides some explanation for the strength of the print news medium. Nevertheless, only 10 per cent say it is their main platform to access news, and newspaper reading is declining (Harris, 2018) – and has been for decades.

### *Legacy media central in news consumption*

Irrespective of platforms, the findings demonstrate that legacy news media provide most of the news Icelanders consume regularly. Icelandic people use the online news of legacy national news providers much more than people in other Nordic countries. One possible explanation could simply be a lack of alternatives. There is a limitation to how many “niche” outlets a population of 360,000 can sustain. Another possible explanation is that the main online news sites are completely open, and all their content free for all. This issue warrants further investigation. There are indications that political parallelism is a stronger feature of the Icelandic media system than in its Nordic counterparts (Guðmundsson, 2013; Jóhannsdóttir & Ólafsson, 2018), but this does not seem to have led to a wider use of alternative news and information sources, as Peruško and colleagues (2015) suggest could be the case in some Eastern European countries. Icelanders do, however, on average use more outlets to access news than people in the other Nordic countries. It could be associated with distrust in a media perceived to be politically connected (Guðmundsson, 2013) or perhaps due to the small size of Icelandic news outlets, making single outlets less able to provide for people’s information needs than bigger news organisations.

### *Impact of demographic factors*

Individual-level factors, such as age and gender, influence how often people access news and the extent to which they embrace digital media in Iceland, as demonstrated in studies elsewhere (Blekesaune et al., 2012; Boulianne, 2015; Dimitrova et al., 2014; Holt et al., 2013; Taipale, 2013). RDNR suggests that the generation gap is widening when it comes to the use of new platforms (Newman et al. 2017). As this has not been studied in Iceland previously, it is not possible to draw any conclusions about changes over time, but the generation gap is considerable. The findings of this study indicate that young people are less interested in news, but at the same time they do access news just as frequently as those older. That could be because they use online news and social media extensively, where there is an abundance of news available. This might be of concern, as studies have indicated that sport and entertainment news are more prominent online than coverage of socially and politically relevant affairs, and online news tends to be shorter and provide less context than news in printed papers. Online news reading could also be more superficial as people tend to scan it rather than read it carefully (Fenton, 2010; Jóhannsdóttir, 2020; Tandoc, 2014). More research is needed as to how people use online news and what kind of information they consume online, and to investigate whether online news consumers are less informed about public affairs than those who rely on traditional platforms.

This study creates a baseline for further research of news consumption in Iceland. It is important to understand how people use news media in light of the role news plays in democratic societies. It is also important to follow news use over time, as patterns of news consumption are constantly changing.

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