

Summary

The Dutch and the news

Use of news media via old and new channels

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95% of the Dutch population aged 13 and older use news media at some point during the week. This means that only 5% do not follow any news media at all. Over half of the population (61%) use at least one news medium on an average day* and devote at least five consecutive minutes to this activity. Most Dutch citizens (39% of the population) obtain their news from the television (at the time of broadcast), followed by reading a printed newspaper (27%) and visiting news websites/apps (11%). Despite the impression of the omnipresence of new media, a large part of the Dutch population still obtain their news principally via traditional channels. Young adults (aged 20-34 years) are avid users of news websites/apps, but are abandoning printed newspapers. It can clearly be observed in this age group that the tipping point from printed to digital media has already been passed: they more often read news online. This is apparent from the in-depth study 'The Dutch and the news. Use of news media via old and new channels' (*Nederlanders en nieuws. Gebruik van nieuwsmedia via oude en nieuwe kanalen*), carried out by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (SCP), which analysed the diary records of almost 3,000 Dutch citizens in 2015. The study shows how much the Dutch keep abreast of news, which channels they use for this, and what differences can be observed between different sections of the population.

The over-65s, men and the well-educated are major consumers of news media

Older people generally stick to the traditional channels to keep abreast of the news. They make relatively little use of news websites/apps. By contrast, young adults (aged 20-34 years) are avid users of news websites/apps, but are abandoning printed newspapers. People aged over 50 who read a newspaper devote a lot of time to doing so (roughly an hour), compared with other age groups (less than three-quarters of an hour). The television is a popular source of news for people with a low education level, while those with a higher education level relatively often visit news websites/apps and listen to news radio. Any differences between men and women in this area are relatively small. Generally speaking, men read digital newspapers or visit news websites/apps more often than women. Men who use online news media also devote around half an hour more to doing so than women on an average day.

Popularity of news websites and apps greatest among 20-49 year-olds

Many Dutch people no longer obtain their news (only) by watching a television news broadcast for 20 minutes or spending an hour reading a newspaper. The appeal of using online news media is that it can be done quickly and frequently 'on the fly'. A small majority of the Dutch population (52%) use news websites or apps briefly (less than five minutes), one or more times per day. That is considerably more than the 11% we recorded on the basis of the diary entries (episodes lasting longer than five minutes). Short-term visits to news websites/apps are mainly popular among men (60%), highly educated people (62%), 20-34 year-olds (65%) and 35-49 year-olds (60%).

Being more media-savvy goes hand in hand with more online news media use

Good digital (information) skills and more affinity with technology – or, more broadly, being more media-savvy – provide an incentive to use online news media. 6% of the Dutch population report that they are unskilled or very unskilled at using the Internet as an information source, and 10% say they are not unskilled, but also not good at using this source. Older people, people with a low education level and women are overrepresented in these groups. More skills go hand in hand with greater use of online news media. To some extent this is related to the composition of the skilled user group, but the level of skills also has an influence after correcting for background characteristics. Dutch people with these skills are more inclined to use online news media than their unskilled counterparts, regardless of their other background characteristics. Affinity with technology – aside from other background characteristics – is also associated with online news media use. People with more affinity ('innovators' and 'early adopters') lead the way in online news media use.

These are some of the conclusions from the in-depth study 'The Dutch and the news. Use of news media via old and new channels' (*Nederlanders en nieuws. Gebruik van nieuwsmedia via oude en nieuwe kanalen*), which is part of the digital publication *Media:Tijd* ('Media: Time'). These publications are part of a series published under the umbrella title *Het culturele draagvlak* ('Support for culture'). This series of studies on cultural participation and media use by the Dutch is carried out with support from the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The data in this in-depth study are drawn from the survey *Media:Tijd 2015* ('Media:Time 2015'), a collaborative project carried out by SCP and a number of Dutch media research organisations: Nationaal Onderzoek Multimedia (NOM) (multimedia research), Nationaal Luister Onderzoek (NLO) (radio audience research), Stichting KijkOnderzoek (SKO) (television audience research) and Dutch Outdoor Research (BRO) (OOH media research).