

Teens are turning to Instagram and TikTok for news, Ofcom report finds

TikTok is also the fastest growing news source among adults

Saman Javed, *The Independent*, Thursday 21 July 2022

Teenagers in the UK favour social media for keeping up with the news over traditional media outlets, a new report from Ofcom¹ has found.

Instagram is used by 29 per cent of teenagers aged between 12 and 15, making it the most popular news source for this age group. It's closely followed by TikTok and YouTube, which are used by 28
5 per cent of young people.

TikTok saw the largest overall increase in use as a news source in the last two years, from 0.8 million UK adults in 2020 to 3.9 million adults in 2022—an increase of six per cent. It is now as popular as the Sky News website and app.

The regulator's News Consumption in the UK 2021/22 report found that BBC One and BBC Two
10 —historically the most popular news sources among teens—have been knocked to fifth place, ranking behind Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and ITV.

Around 24 per cent of teenagers use BBC channels for news in 2022, a significant decline from the 45 per cent recorded just five years ago.

Almost one in 10 (9 per cent) of 12-15-year-olds still select BBC One and BBC Two as their most
15 important news source, but this represents a decrease from 14 per cent in 2021. Similar proportions select TikTok, YouTube, and ITV (seven per cent).

According to the findings, half of TikTok's userbase for news are aged between 16 and 24.

Those who use the platform in this way say they get more of their news from "other people they follow" rather than news organisations.

20 However, trust in social media news sources varies. Half of YouTube and Twitter users think the platforms provide trustworthy news stories, but fewer than a third of teenagers (30 per cent) trust TikTok's news content.

"Teenagers today are increasingly unlikely to pick up a newspaper or tune into TV News, instead preferring to keep up-to-date by scrolling through their social feeds," Yih-Choung Teh, Ofcom's
25 group director for strategy and research commented.

"And while youngsters find news on social media to be less reliable, they rate these services more highly for serving up a range of opinions on the day's topical stories."

Despite the increase in use of social media among the younger generation, BBC One remains the most used online news source among adults.

30 TV is still the go-to news source overall for adults, with 71 per cent of people voting it the most "reliable" news source. Social media was voted the least reliable source.

The report also surveyed people on the most trusted news outlets. CNN ranked top and is trusted by 83 per cent of respondents.

Sky News (75 per cent) and the BBC (73 per cent) came in second and third.

35 This is followed by ITV (70 per cent), Channel 4 (66 per cent) and Channel 5 (59 per cent).

A BBC spokesperson commented: "According to this Ofcom research the BBC is the most used news source for 12-15 year olds—via TV, radio, and online—and young people are also consuming BBC News on social media platforms such as our hugely popular Instagram account."

¹ Ofcom: the Office of Communications, the authority that regulates communication in the United Kingdom, including television, radio, telecommunications and mail.