

Gen Z: Attracting the next generation of news consumers



Generation Z: Intro

The first generation of truly digital natives is expanding.

News organizations are challenged to remain relevant amid the pervasiveness of digital media.

Gen Z seeks truth – and they want instant gratification from news.

We'll examine who they are and how to appeal to this emerging audience.



Generation Z: Agenda

1. Gen Z defined
2. Media behaviors
3. News consumption
4. Challenges and remedies
5. Summary

1. The Generation Defined

Who they are and why they matter

Snapshot



Digitally Savvy

Never lived in a world without digital technology or the Internet



Social

Social media is a primary touchpoint in their daily lives



Diverse

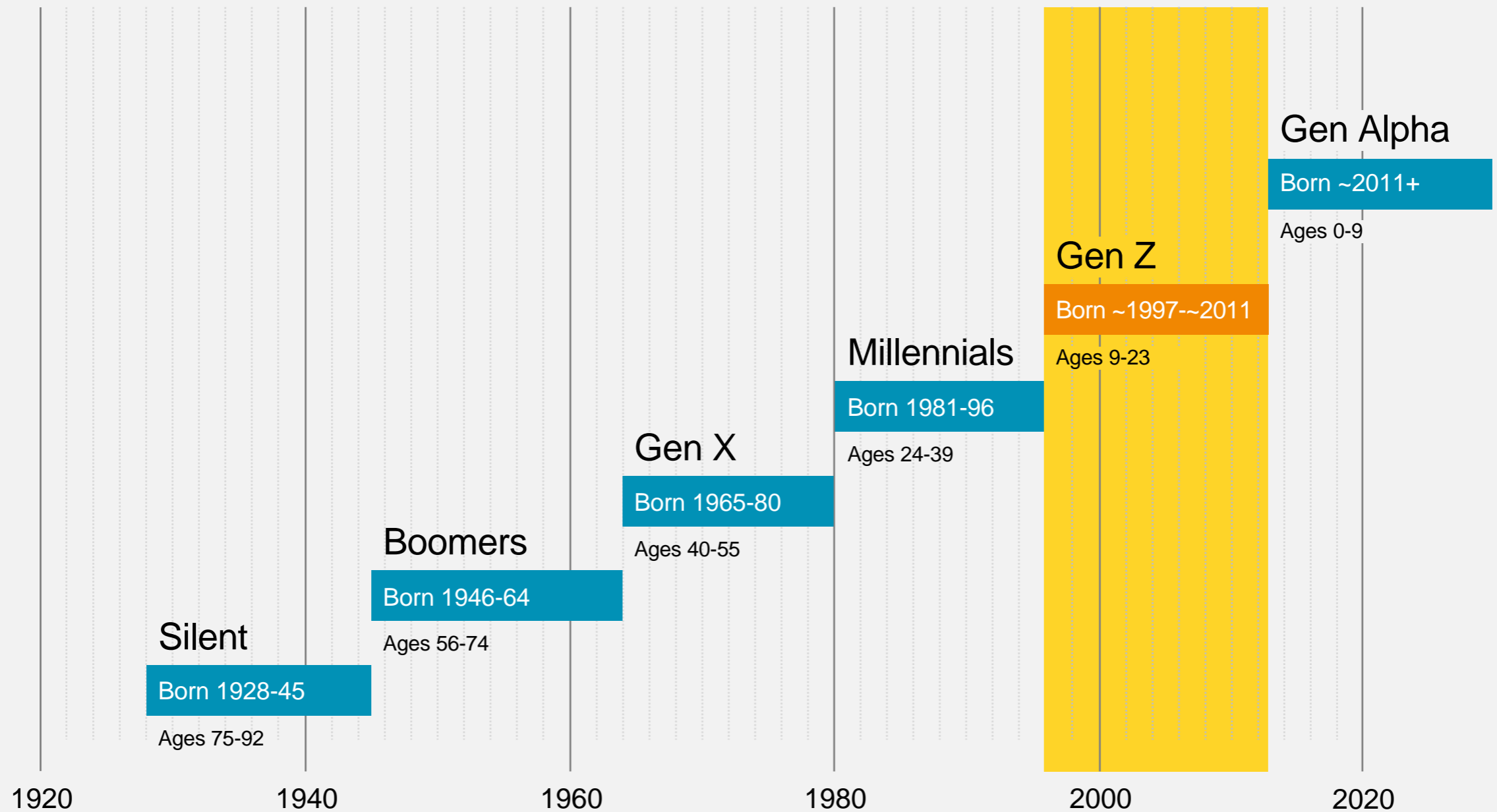
Most racially and ethnically-diverse generation with **48% from communities of color**



Populous

Largest generation in American history, comprising **~27% of the US population**

Our generations



Note: Years are approximate. Generational analysis isn't an exact science.

Defining moments

Generations develop strong emotional connections to formative events and experiences that impact how they view themselves and the world around them.

SILENT GENERATION

1925 - 1945

- _ The Great Depression
- _ The Dust Bowl
- _ WWII
- _ McCarthyism

BOOMERS

1946 - 1963

- _ Vietnam
- _ Woodstock
- _ Civil Rights Movement
- _ President Kennedy's assassination
- _ Watergate
- _ Space exploration

GEN X

1964 - 1978

- _ Fall of the Berlin Wall
- _ Space Shuttle Challenger disaster
- _ AIDS
- _ MTV
- _ Iranian hostage crisis
- _ Desert Storm

MILLENNIALS (OR GEN Y)

1979 - 1996

- _ 9/11
- _ Columbine
- _ Google
- _ Social media
- _ Video games
- _ Y2K

GEN Z

~1997 - ~2011

- _ The Great Recession
- _ ISIS
- _ Sandy Hook
- _ Marriage equality
- _ First Black president
- _ Populism / Trump
- _ #MeToo movement
- _ Covid-19

Gen Z seeks truth

The search for the truth is at the root of all Generation Z behavior.



Unique

They want to express their own individual truths, not be placed into stereotypical boxes.



Inclusive

They don't want to be tied to one cause. Their true community lets them continually flow between interests.



Accepting

They seek to understand different truths and respect them even if they don't agree with them.



Practical

Their less idealistic and more analytical, searching for the truth behind everything.

Psychographics: Down to earth



Because they're tech-savvy consumers and mobile-first, they have high standards for how their time is spent online.



82% trust friends and family about brands and products over anyone else.



They most closely mirror millennials on key social and political issues, but without much of the optimism.



They consider themselves more accepting, supporting movements such as Black Lives Matter, transgender rights, and feminism.

Why they matter



\$143 billion
in spending power
in 2020



40%
of global consumers
in 2020

To capture a piece of this growing audience, news media must establish relationships with them now.

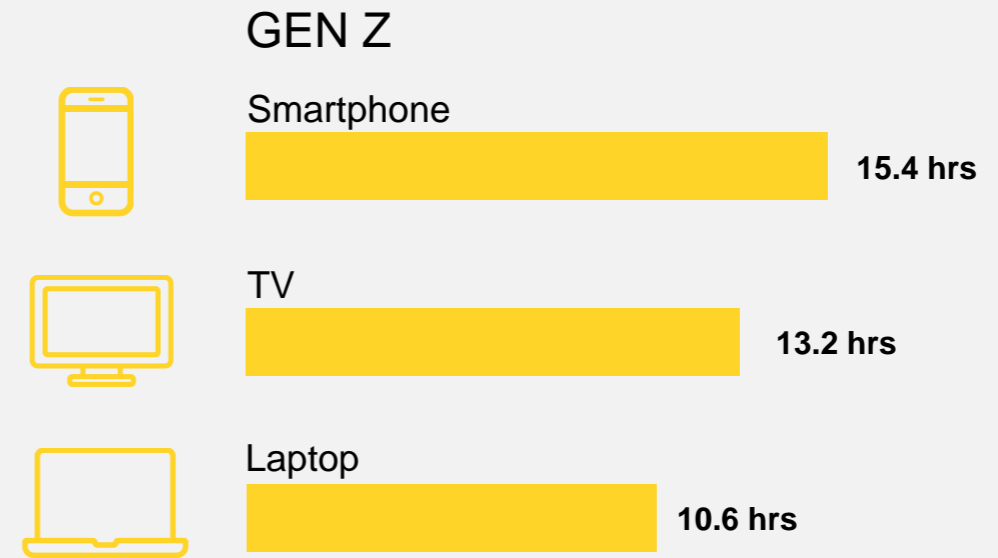
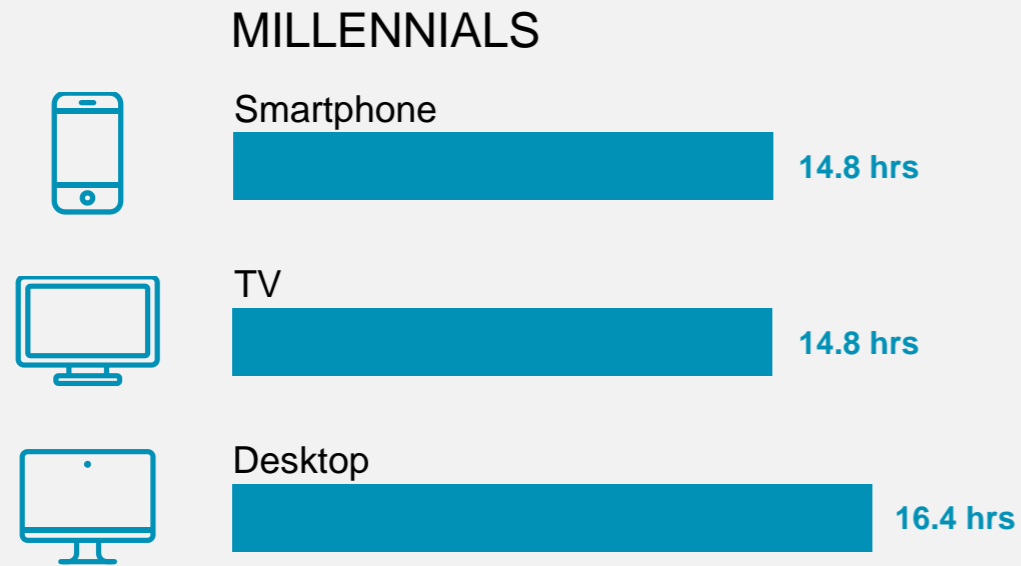


2. Media Behaviors

How often they interact with media, the platforms they use, and the role of social

Phone over TV

Most Used Devices (average hours / week)



Weekly TV Usage (average hours / week)



BOOMERS



GEN X



MILLENNIALS



GEN Z

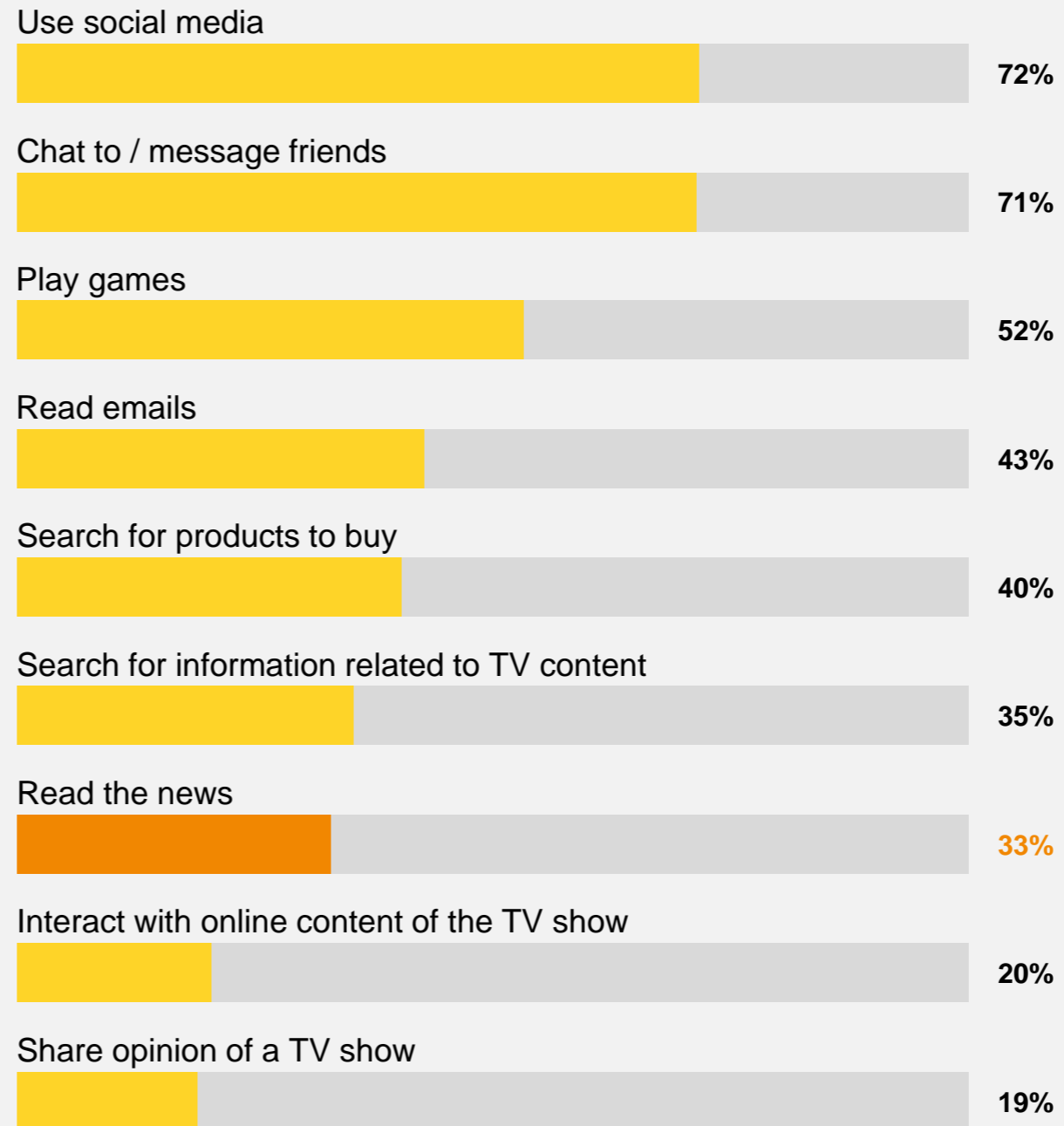
TV doesn't capture their full attention



89%

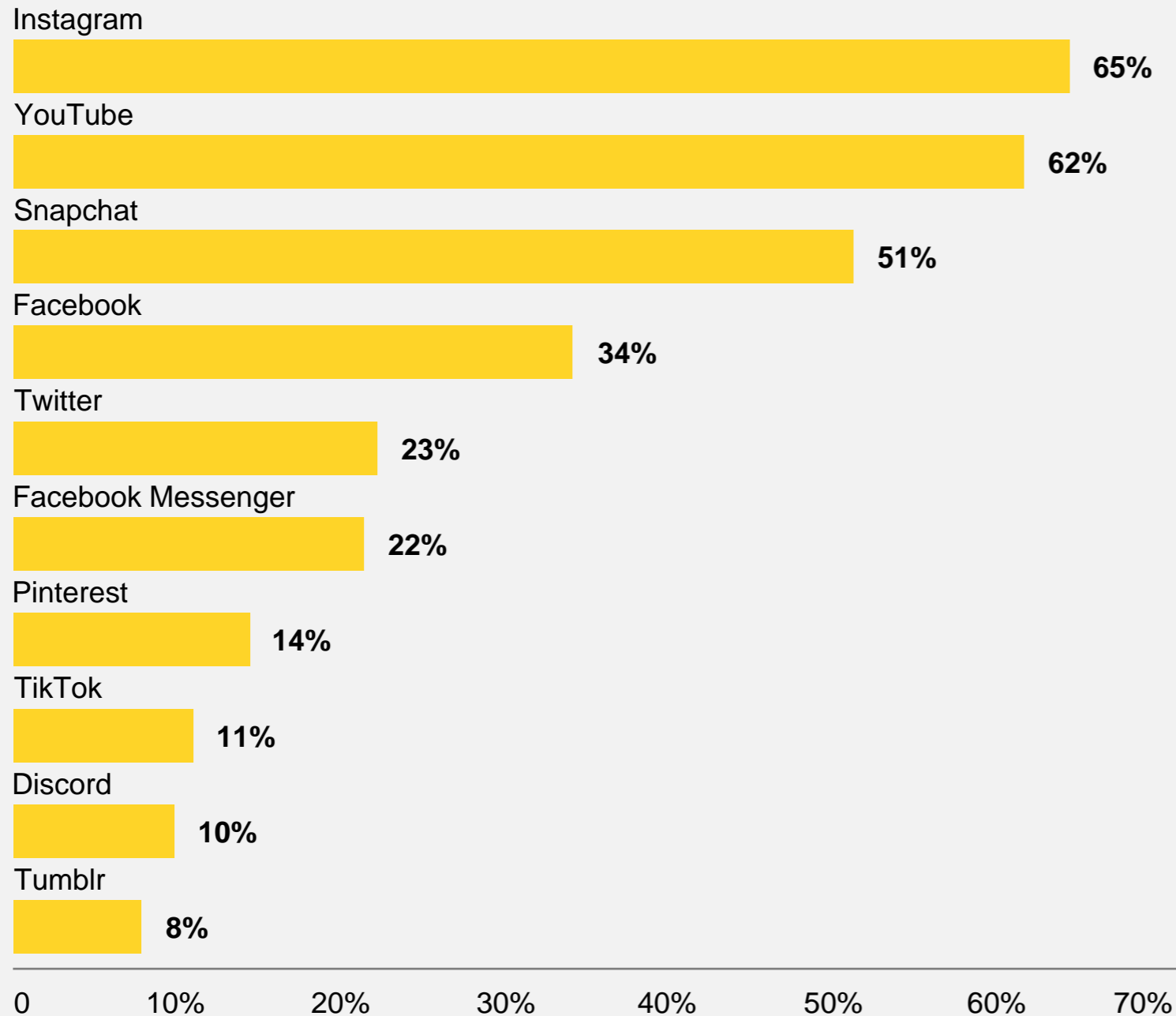
Are using a mobile device while watching TV

What do they do while watching TV?

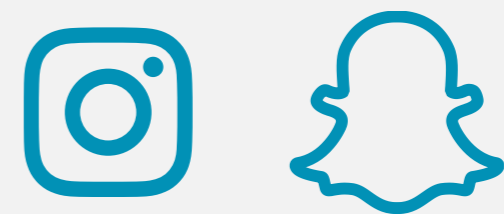


Instagram over Facebook

Social media platforms Gen Z checks daily



Source: [Business Insider](#), 2019; [MediaPost](#), 2020



The rise of trolling on Facebook and Twitter has caused a retreat to more insulated spaces like Instagram and Snapchat.

It ties back to truth seeking:

- _ Expressing their own true identities
- _ Making authentic connections



“ [Facebook is] ancient. Like a mom’s thing. I don’t really use it anymore.”

– Ellie, 18-20

The rise of a visual culture



Easy

They're not interested in sifting through content to find what they like.



Scannable

Snapchat and Instagram have short form content that's easy to scan.



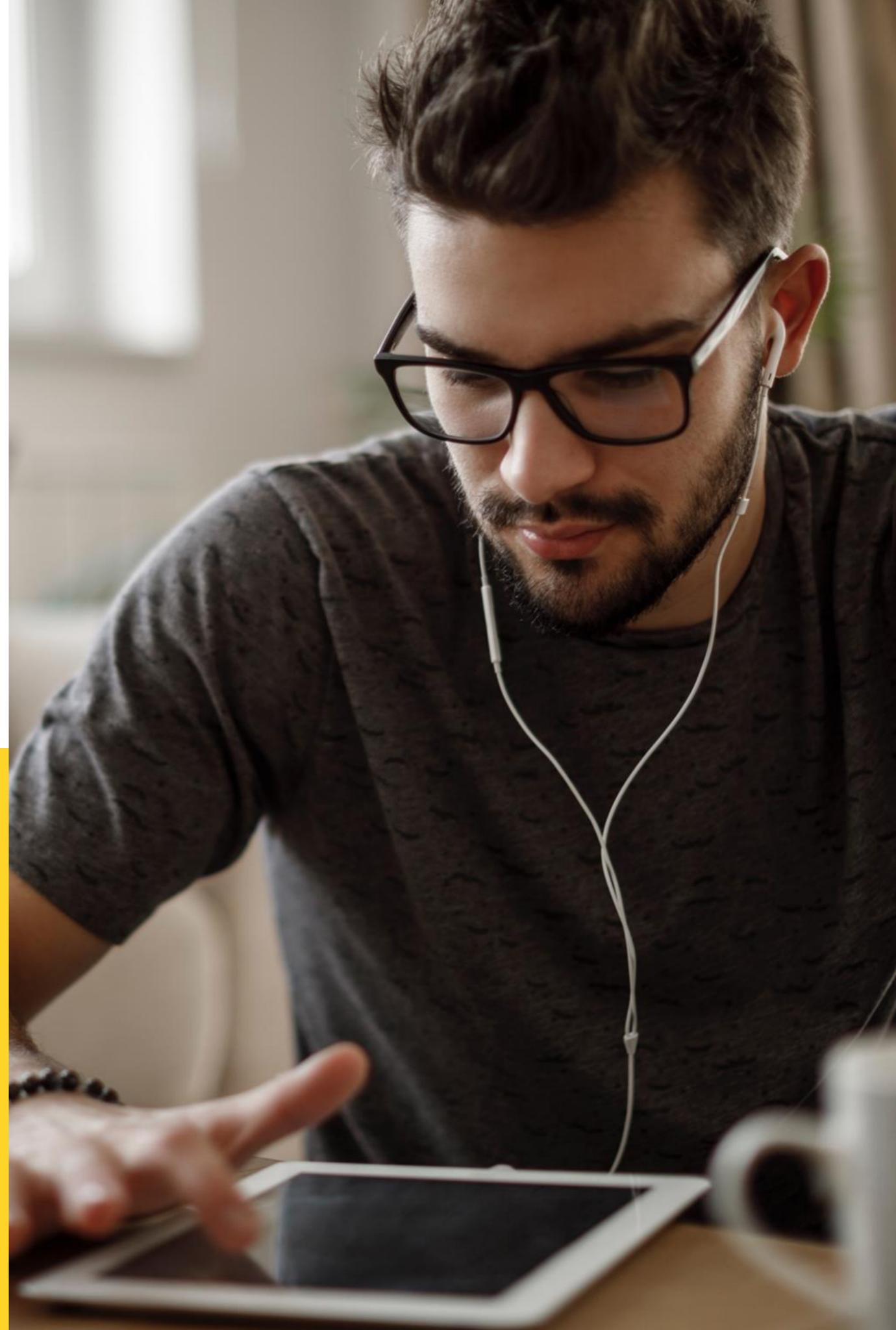
Visual

YouTube is a source for entertainment, learning, or connecting with a creator.

3. News Consumption

How they think about news and where they seek it

Gen Z is not
only your future,
but also your
current audience.



Snapshot



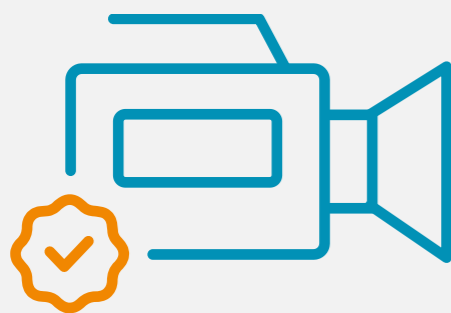
Less Engaged

Gen Z is less enamored with traditional news providers.



Instant Gratification

They don't want to have to work to get news (e.g., lots of reading).



Unfiltered

They seek authentic reporting that is not dumbed down.



Visually Social

They prefer to get news visually through social platforms rather than websites or apps.

Source: [Reuters](#), [University of Oxford](#), [Flamingo](#), 2019










“ [Visual storytelling is] like a Snapchat story. I think it’s better for young people, so they don’t have to read as much and get confused. It’s really short. It’s not paragraphs. I like that.”

– Ruby, 18-20

Social media is the new TV

Where US adults get most of their news

	Adults 24+	Generation Z
 Social Media	17%	49%
 Other	17%	18%
 Television	42%	15%
 Online Outlets	13%	11%
 Radio	5%	3%
 Podcasts	2%	2%
 Newspaper	4%	2%

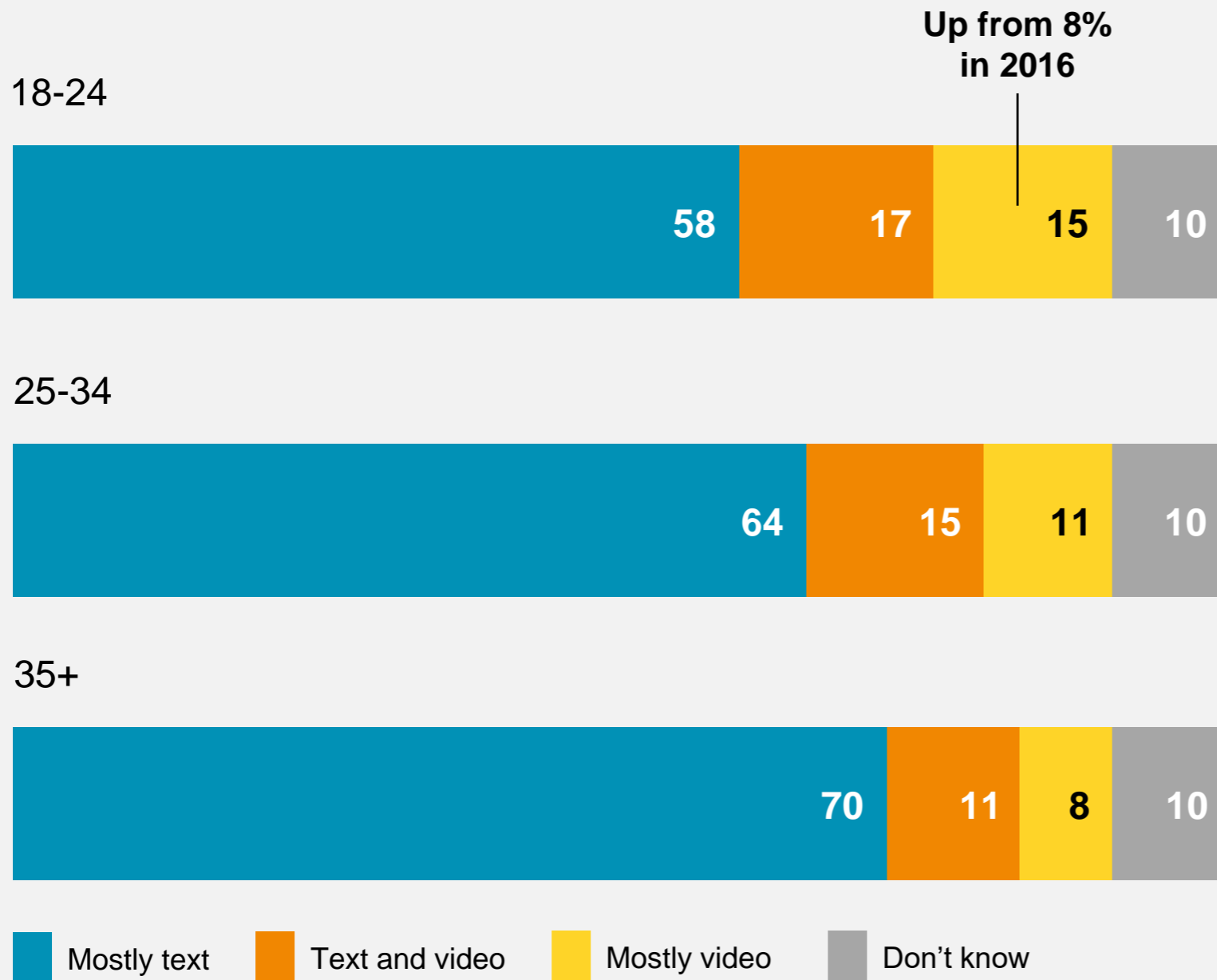


“I enjoy [news] being intertwined with social media. I don’t have to actively think ‘Oh, let me check up on my friends and let me check up on my news.’ I can do both at the same time.”

– Maggie, 21-24

Text is still preferred for online news

Preferred online news format

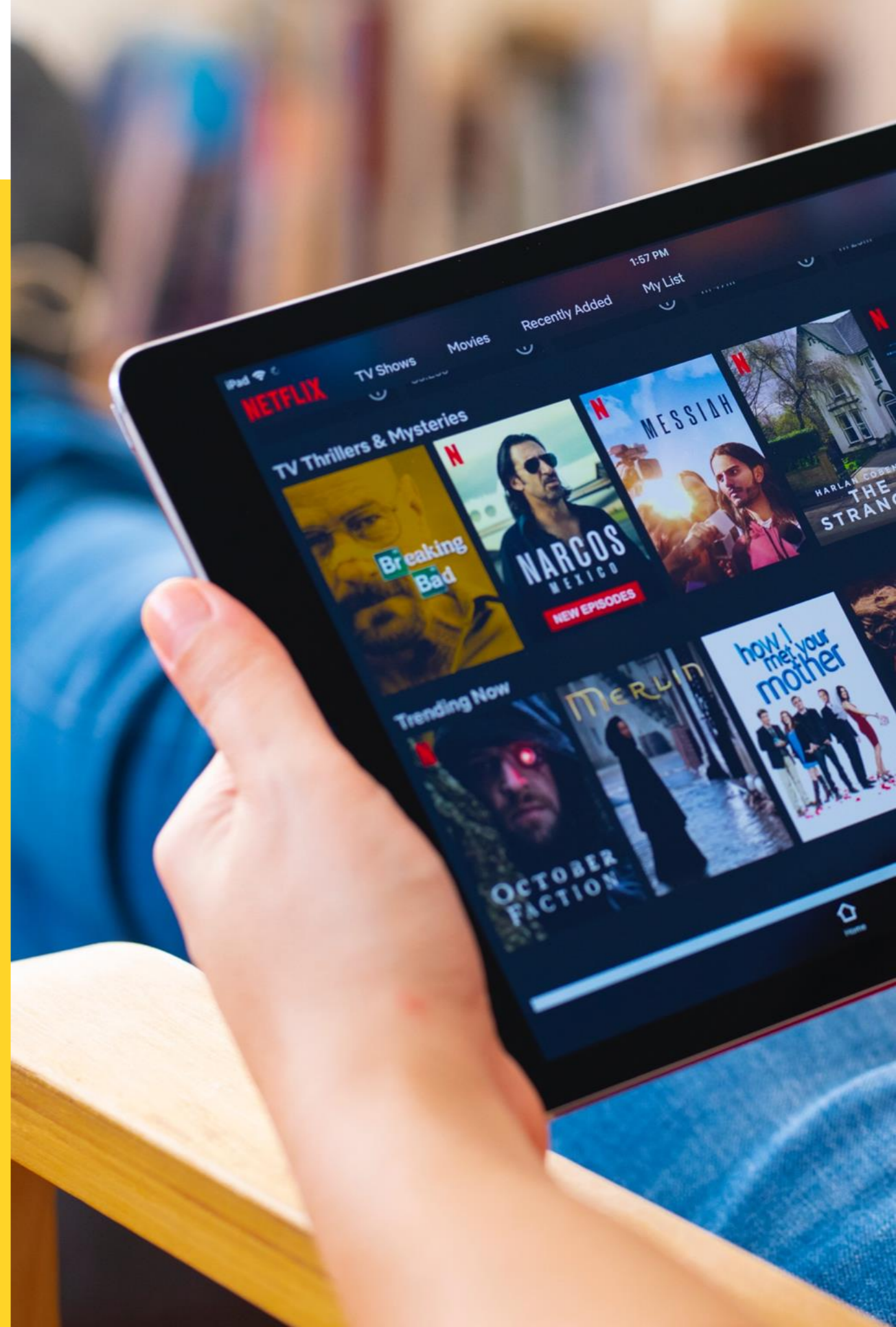


Instagram is playing a central role in popularizing news video. However, the majority of Gen Z still prefers text over video because of control and flexibility.

News is a chore

Social media and entertainment services are making it hard to attract attention to traditional news content—which is often seen as a chore.

And news brands often feel irrelevant to their personal lives.

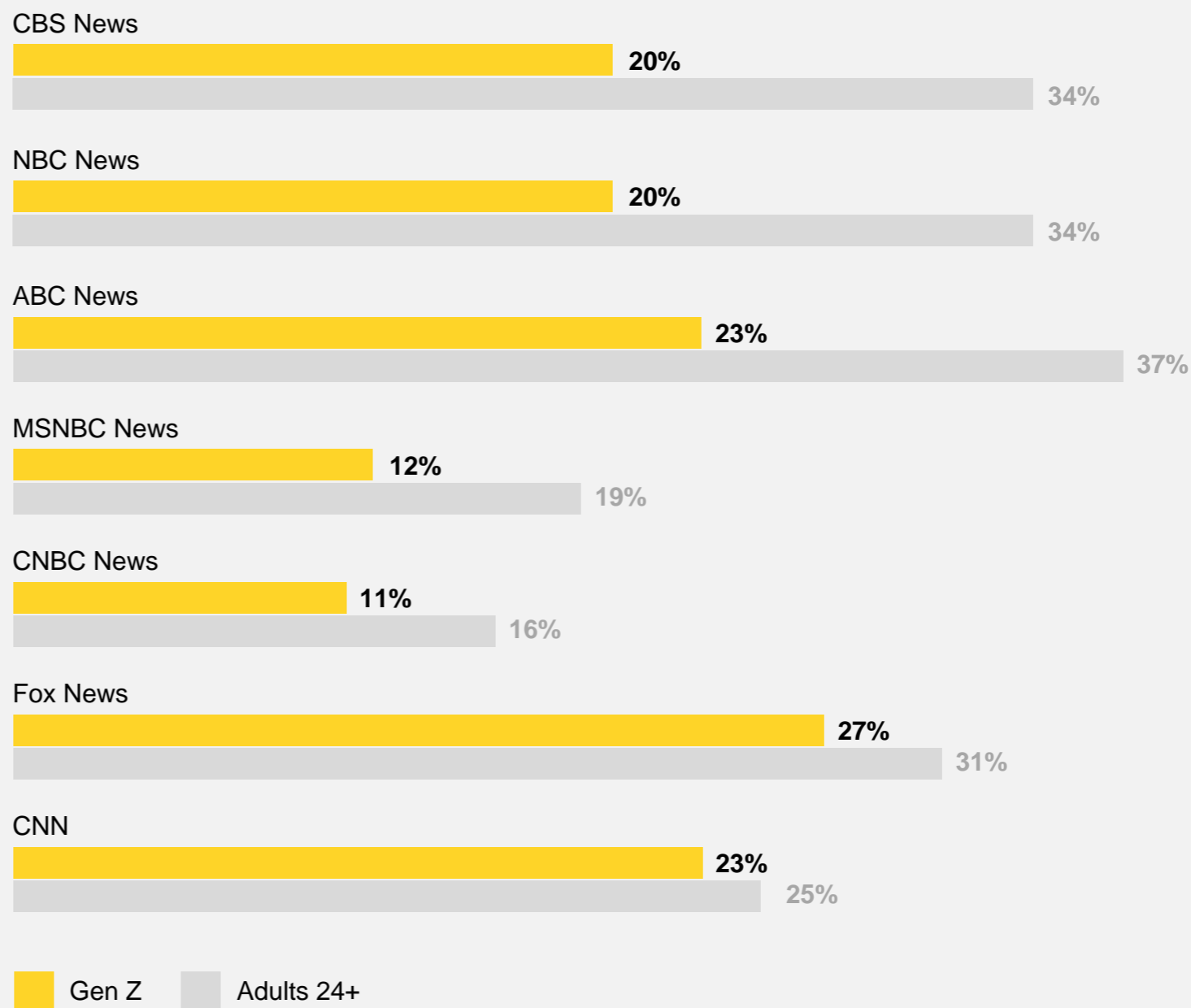


TV news is on decline

Gen Z adults are less likely to watch TV news than older generations...



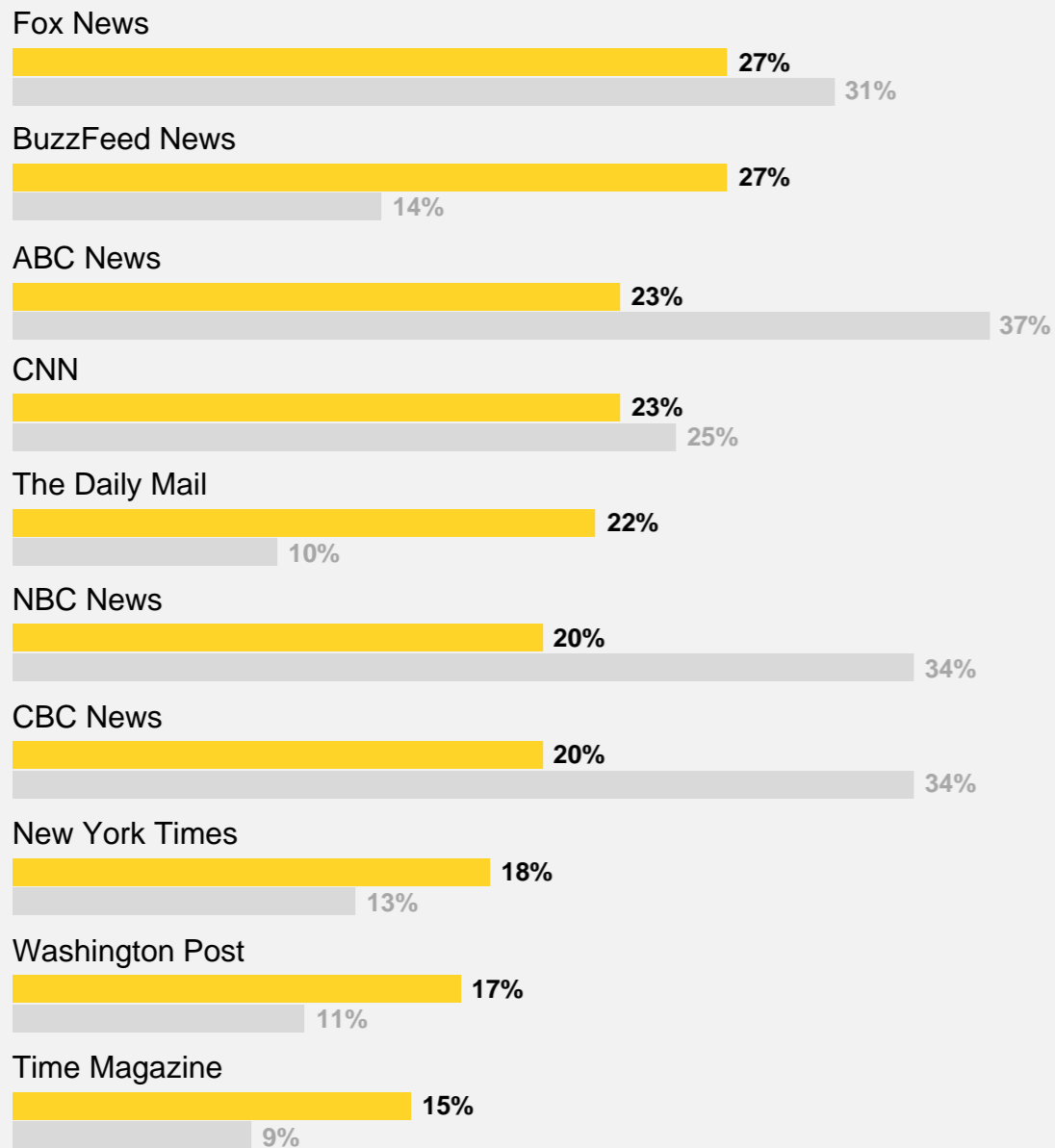
The share who use each platform at least once a week.



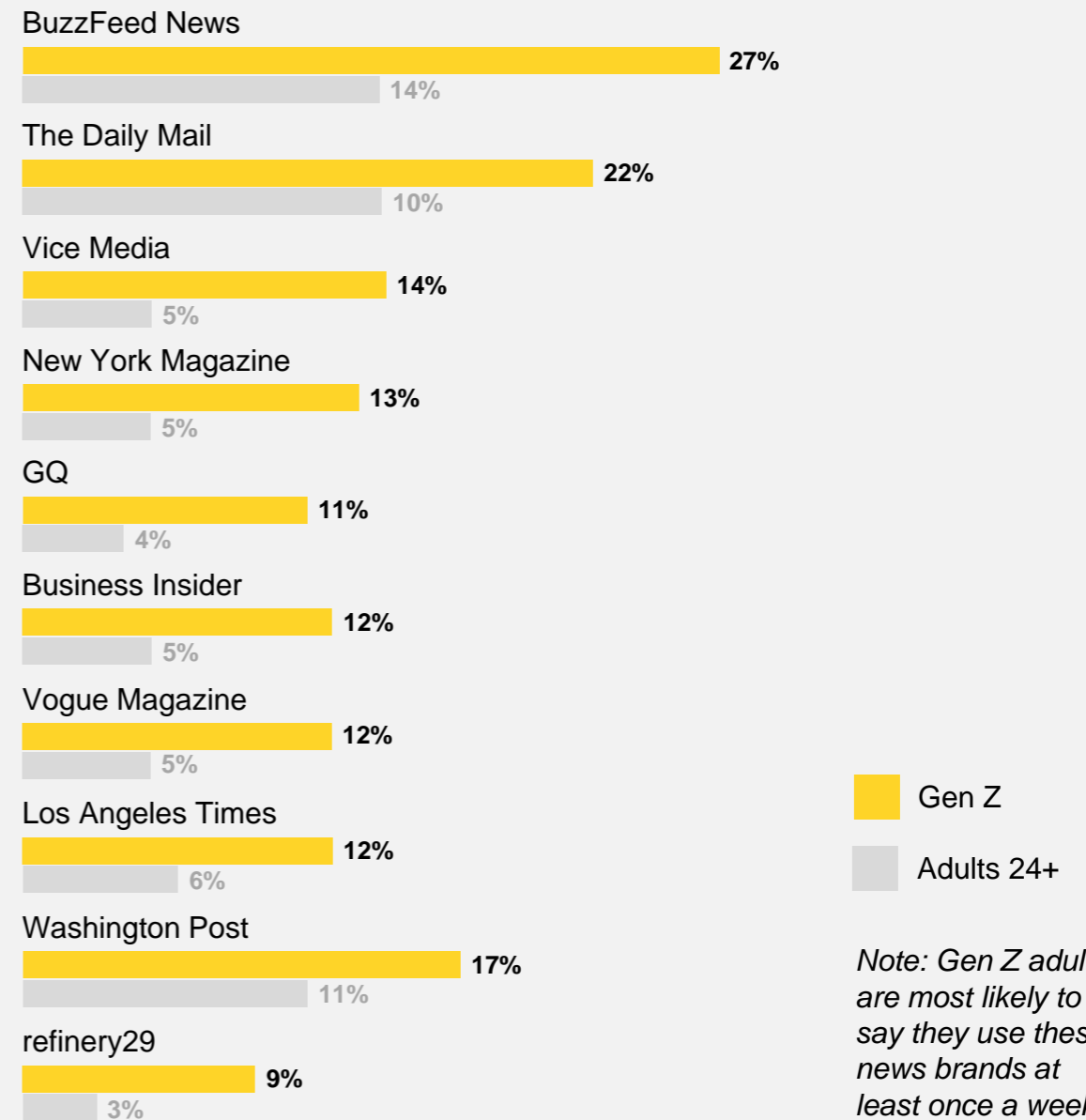
Source: *Morning Consult*, May 2019

Gen Z has a different news appetite

Gen Z's 10 most used news brands



News brands Gen Z uses at a higher percentage than older adults



■ Gen Z
■ Adults 24+

Note: Gen Z adults are most likely to say they use these news brands at least once a week.

Source: *Morning Consult*, May 2019

But, could COVID drive a change in behavior?



106%

Increase in 18-34 impressions for **local evening news** in the second week of March 2020.

Can this increased exposure build news consumption habits among a younger generation?

A few ideas for sustaining:

- Feature younger reporters and presenters.
- Consider updating wardrobes. Lose the formal wear.
- Produce content that delivers short and fast updates to ongoing stories of interest to them.
- Have a stronger presence on social media, particularly mobile platforms.

Four ways Gen Z interacts with news



Dedicated

Devoting time to the news, as you might a novel or TV series



Updated

Getting the key news updates you need/want in an efficient way



Time-Filler

Something to do or to amuse, often while doing something else



Intercepted

A notification or message intercepts what was otherwise happening

PODCASTS		
WEBSITES	REDDIT & TWITTER	
YOUTUBE	APPS	
NEWSPAPER	AGGREGATORS	
TV		INSTAGRAM
RADIO		FACEBOOK
		WHATSAPP
		SNAPCHAT

4. Challenges and remedies

Combatting a disengaged audience

“The past models won’t work if you apply them and expect people to grow up – that’s not going to happen.”

– Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism

Overcoming Gen Z's perceptions about news

	Gen Z Perception	Symptoms	Remedies
1	<p>“News isn’t relevant to me. It’s too narrow and repetitive.”</p>	<p>Endless coverage of the same topics, reported in the same way.</p> <p>International stories often reported with a nationalistic slant.</p>	<p>Cover broader range of topics (art & culture, activism, LGBTQ+, the environment).</p> <p>Focus on human, personal, and real stories.</p>
2	<p>“News feels too negative and media overplays this negativity.”</p>	<p>Negative stories without reference to positive action.</p> <p>Perceived unfairness in targeting public figures and favoritism of certain groups.</p> <p>Too many extreme opinions given equal voice.</p>	<p>Produce stories that can inspire the audience about the possibility of change and provide a path to positive action.</p> <p>Avoid coverage based on stereotypes.</p> <p>Provide balance. Be careful of giving extremism an undeserved voice.</p>
3	<p>“News seems overly partisan, which drives interpretation of facts and events.”</p>	<p>Quality journalism brands should avoid highly opinionated or inflammatory views.</p>	<p>Expose the audience to a variety of genuine opinions.</p> <p>Offer interpretations outside the repetitive and overly-simplified left / right divide.</p>
4	<p>“The tone of news is not relatable to my life.”</p>	<p>An overly serious, institutional, dry, and technical tone, especially for those who may not be familiar with the topic.</p> <p>Tone is too strident and focused on superficial attention-grabbing.</p>	<p>Focus on more human stories, touches of informality, honest opinions (real people, real points of view), and comedy, or entertainment.</p>

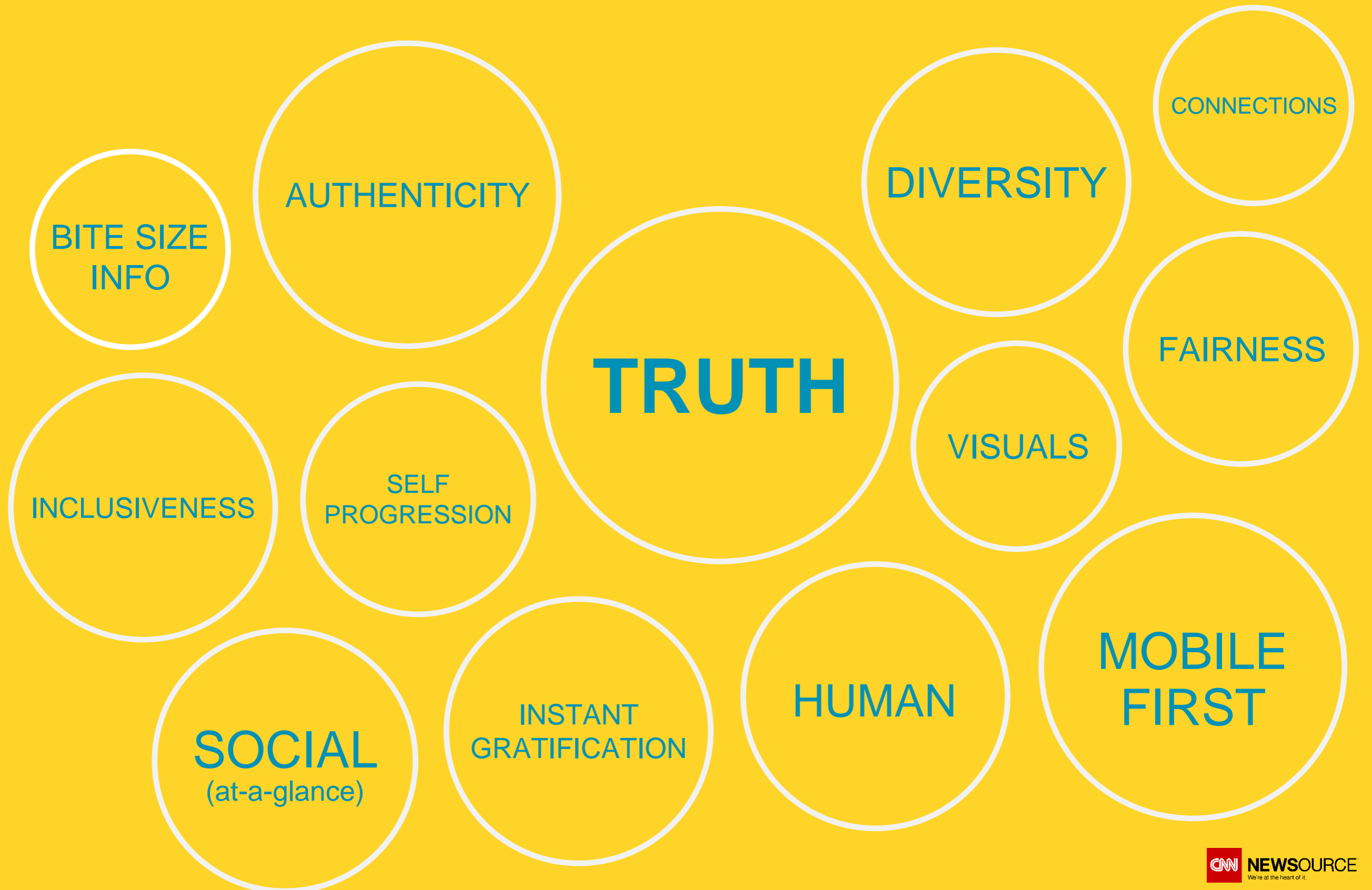
Overcoming Gen Z's perceptions about news

	Gen Z Perception	Symptoms	Remedies
5	<p>"News is not always in sync with any given social media site I'm using."</p>	<p>News on social media appears as though its focus is to redirect the user to the brand's website. News is not always in line with the content, format and style of a given platform.</p> <p>News brand imitates non-news brand style, trying too hard to fit the platform.</p>	<p>Use a platform as a general consumer to understand how audiences engage.</p> <p>Create experiences native to mobile and social platforms. Incorporate those ideas into your website and app.</p>
6	<p>"Fake news is a real thing."</p>	<p>Stories show up on social media without attribution or from an unknown brand.</p>	<p>Be as transparent as possible about sources. Always provide attribution.</p> <p>Call attention to your trusted, quality brand, especially on third-party platforms like Facebook.</p>
7	<p>"News is something to 'get through' because I have to, not because I want to."</p>	<p>Some stories require too much effort to understand.</p> <p>Content and delivery that is less engaging than other, more entertaining media content.</p>	<p>Make the experience feel as easy and accessible as Netflix.</p> <p>Be clear and direct to explain complex stories, without dumbing it down.</p> <p>For ongoing stories, create background content that can be referenced for context during new developments.</p>

5. Summary

Key takeaways

What resonates with Generation Z



Four Key Takeaways

1

Don't shy away from serious news, but also include stories that reflect fairness, diversity, and inclusiveness.

2

Don't make your audience work to find or understand content. Use descriptive headlines, avoid popup blockers, include explainers.

3

Provide not just 'what you should know' but also what is useful, interesting, and fun to know.

4

Maintain your credibility. Don't rely on tabloid news to get higher ratings. Produce content for an intelligent audience.

Gen Z news consumers prefer quick hits of hard-working content that is easy to consume.

The product is not the problem. It's how we deliver it and how our younger audience finds it that must adapt.

To learn how CNN Newssource can help you tell stories more relevant to Generation Z, please contact us at NewsSource@cnn.com.