

Who is our audience? How are they getting their facts?

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**WHERE ARE MOST
PEOPLE GETTING THEIR
FACTS?**

5 rapid reminders

- Outside of work which specifically requires it, only a small proportion of people actively look for facts
- They collide, randomly and sometimes unwillingly, with facts
- Most people prefer consuming emotion and opinion (preferably strong ones) to facts
- The written word encodes more complex meanings than audio-visual media. But most people prefer TV to reading
- More information is available now than at any other time in history

It's not just a communications revolution

- Mistrust and resentment of elites and experts may be cyclical, but this time it is deep
- Most analysis of discontent – conducted by elites journalists and commentators – focuses on economic motives
- It glosses over the fact that political elites are seen as self-interested, corrupt and intellectually exhausted
- Social media has spread and helped to legitimise these feelings

UK voter groups	Percentage of electorate
<p>Comfortable Britain: mostly older people in professional occupations and who own their own home. Right of centre.</p>	<p>26%</p>
<p>Liberal elite: graduates, liberal, voted heavily to 'remain' in EU referendum.</p>	<p>18%</p>
<p>Young, disaffected: Younger working class 'JAMs' ('just about managing').</p>	<p>16%</p>
<p>Liberal youth: younger people in middle-level non-graduate jobs, relatively liberal.</p>	<p>16%</p>
<p>Traditional working class: older working class voters, relatively left-wing but not socially liberal.</p>	<p>14%</p>
<p>Socially left behind: Older working class voters, socially conservative, concerned about immigration, voted Leave.</p>	<p>11%</p>

Source: <http://natcen.ac.uk/blog/who-voted-labour-in-2017>



It takes two to speak the truth: one to speak,
another to hear.

(Henry David Thoreau)

Supply and demand

- We are not just looking at how available and accessible facts are, but also appetite for them
- A lot of attention is devoted to the supply side (detecting ‘fake news’ and distortion: factchecking, debunking). But there is also a ‘demand side’ to the equation
- So how statistics organisations react involves not just the structure of media, but also attitudes to truth (and the relationship between the two)

Sources of facts

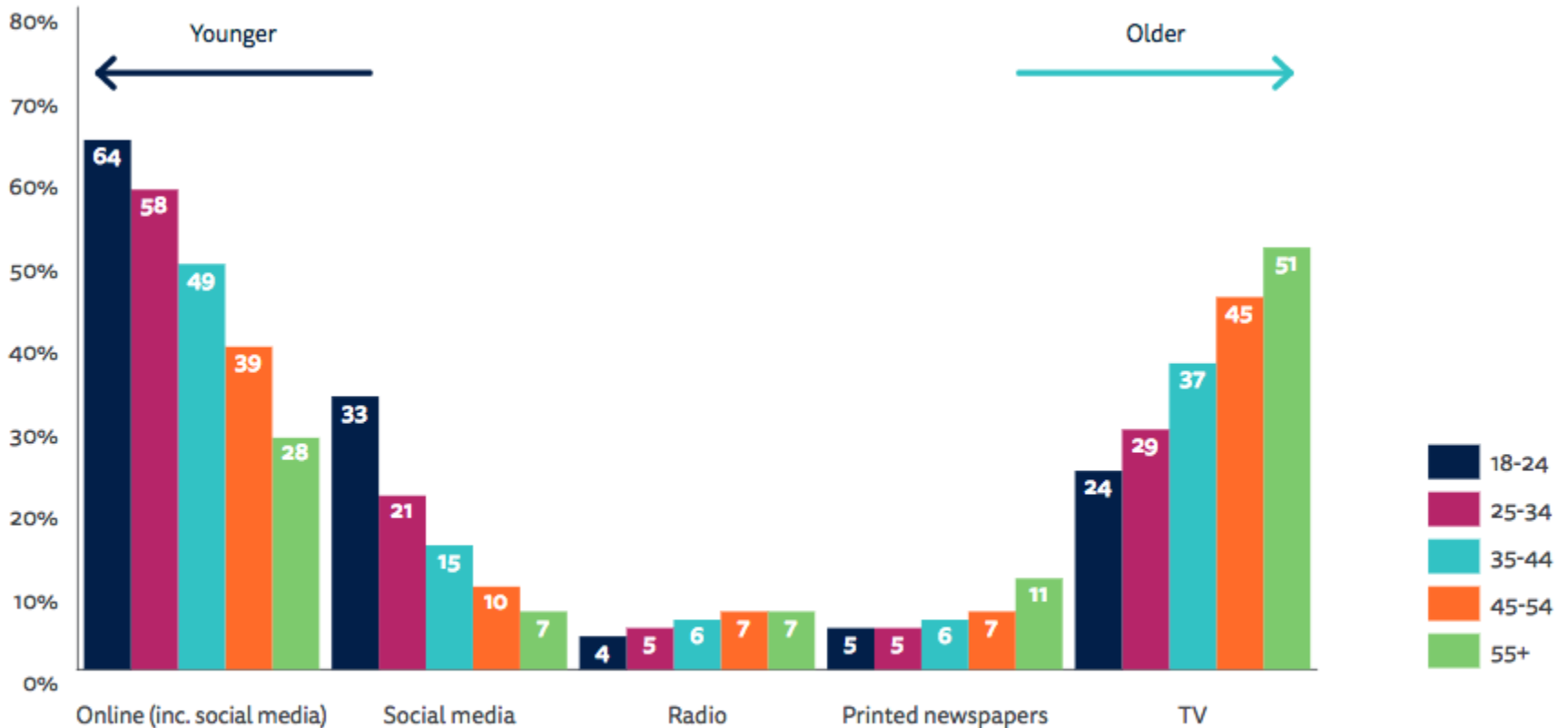
1. Google (and lesser search engines)
 2. Facebook and Twitter
 3. News channels (TV dominant, for now)
 4. Politicians
- These changes are transformative, not adaptive. The speed, ease and volume of what can be known and republished with a thumb and smartphone alter the connective tissue of all societies

The assault

- The attack on how we agree or disagree about truth (via facts, iteration, research etc) is an assault on the way modern societies are built
- Social media platforms have helped this (but did not cause it)
- Online technology cannot be reversed. Enlightenment values must be defended in new circumstances

'Main source of news'

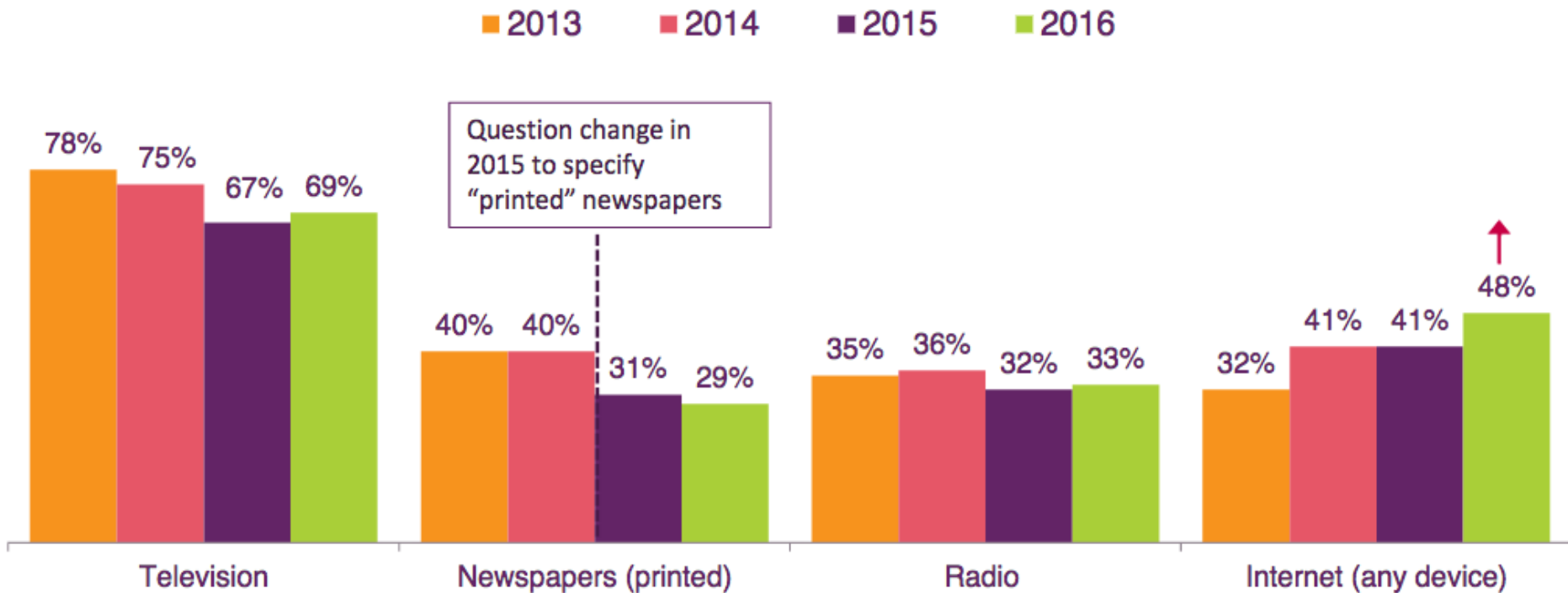
RISJ survey: 7k people, 36 markets



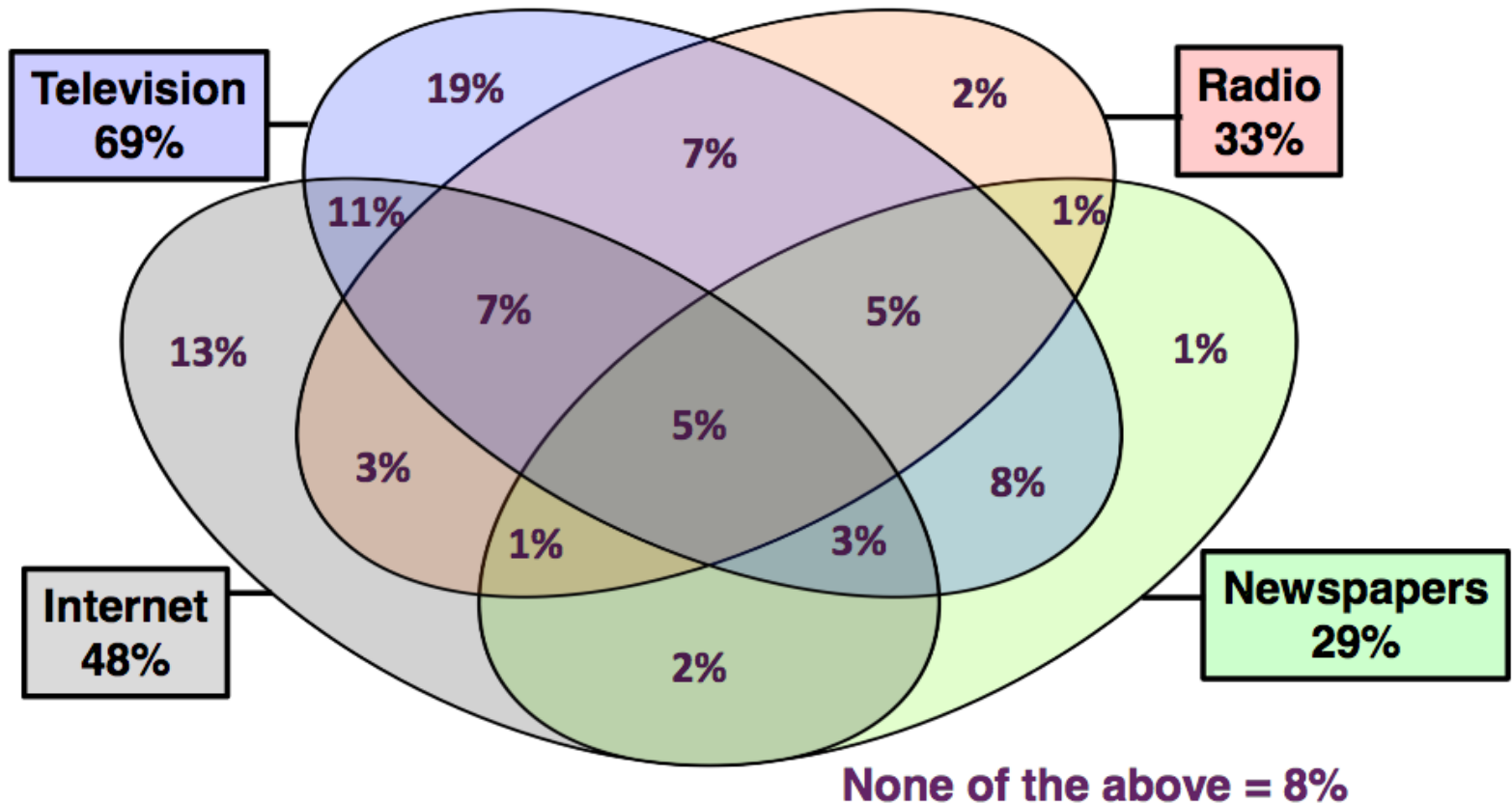
Q4. You say you've used these sources of news in the last week, which would you say is your MAIN source of news? Base: Aged 18-24/25-34/35-44/45-54/55+ that used a source of news in the last week: All markets = 7754/12,332/12,976/12,630/24,620.

Television dominates, for now

% of adults in UK



How Britain gets news



Q3a) Which of the following do you use for news nowadays?

A mixed economy of information

- Two-thirds of social media news users in the United States also watch television news (67%) and two-thirds also visit mainstream websites or apps (66%) – a bit more than the the general population. Just 2% ONLY use social media for news in an average week.
- Beware overplayed ‘filter bubble’ theories
- Content generators and distributors decoupled

**HOW SHOULD
STATISTICAL AGENCIES
ADAPT THEIR
COMMUNICATIONS?
WITH WHAT SOCIAL
PLATFORMS?**

Advice

- Remember what makes you you
- Experiment and adapt (don't tell staff to 'innovate').
- Try many things; adopt few
- Hire some skills: intelligence agents and anthropologists
- It may feel like asymmetric warfare, but don't despair!

Above all...

- Don't be afraid of big ideas – or of emotion
- This is not just about media techniques but about the role of truth in civil society, about the quality of public reason
- Like it or not, you are in a changed arena

Take risks!

- Speak up, defend your ground

🏠 > News

Boris Johnson accuses statistics regulator of 'wilfully distorting' his words in spat over claim Britain will gain £350m a week from Brexit



- **Neither I nor anyone else can guarantee that it will work, but it is the right thing to do**

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