

# Syria Audience Research Study

May 2023



## ACRONYMS

<b>FPU</b>	Free Press Unlimited
<b>IDI</b>	In-depth interview
<b>KII</b>	Key Informant Interview
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>SIDA</b>	The Swedish International Development Agency
<b>SDF</b>	Syrian Democratic Forces
<b>NES</b>	North-east Syria
<b>NWS</b>	North-west Syria
<b>SCS</b>	South and central Syria

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# 1. Executive Summary

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This audience research report aims to provide FPU with insights into Syrians' media consumption habits, their information needs, and their perceptions and attitudes towards the media they consume. This is the second audience research study completed by Jouri and it builds on the findings from the 2020 study. This report examines the role that independent media plays in their daily lives, with a particular focus on youth. The data show how youth perceive the media they consume and how they view their representation within the Syrian media landscape. Above all, the study aims to better understand the impact of media in all its forms - local, national, international, partisan and independent - on Syrian audiences.

## 1.1. Methodology

The data was collected in March 2023 in 10 locations across Northeast Syria (NES), North-West Syria (NWS), and South and Central Syria (SCS) to gain a diverse range of perspectives from Syrian audience groups, focusing on individuals with different religious, political, ethnic and social backgrounds, as well as age, gender and education differences. NES was selected as a priority area for this study, where a higher percentage of surveys, KIs, and IDIs was conducted. The areas of focus include the cities of Hasaka, Qamishli and Deir Ez Zor. This year's study is contextualised by the 7.8 magnitude earthquake in South-eastern Turkey and Northern Syria which occurred on 6th February 2023.

Quantitative surveys asked 1,200 respondents about their media consumption and sharing patterns, news needs, perceptions of local,

regional and international media, levels of trust and their perceptions of what independent media is and the roles that it plays in their lives. There was also a focus on Syrian youth and how they view their representation in the media. Additionally, the 40 IDIs provided an in-depth examination of the participants' perceptions, behaviours and expectations of media in Syria. Interviews with media professionals also provided insight into the evolving media situation. This year's methodology differs slightly from the 2020 study where Jouri also collected insights from media diaries and viewing clinics.

## 1.2. Key Findings

The key findings suggest that Syrians continue to adopt social media and social messaging apps as the primary channels through which they access news. They appreciate the privacy of messaging apps for communication with friends and family, and check the credibility of news stories with friends, family and other sources through these apps. In 2023, Syrians required news content about local issues, economic news and updates regarding basic services, all of which differed from the 2020 findings.

Respondents also told us that they prioritise breaking news, and have minimal dependency on radio or print. They are adept at recognising partisan media and prefer news from familiar, credible media that are free from political bias. They have average levels of trust in most local, regional and international media, with very little differentiation between the most trusted and least trusted (only 10% difference). Residents of Ar-Raqqa have some of the lowest levels of trust across media providers. Syrians have

medium/mixed levels of trust in a wide range of online and offline news and information sources, including independent media. Over 74% of the survey respondents reported that they trust news that they receive on social media from friends and family. This result is the same for males and females, with a high level of consensus.

Survey respondents told us that they also want independent media to be free from government influence and have the ability to discuss any issue that they want. Interviewees defined independent media as those outlets that did not have any bias towards any of the parties to the conflict, and that were financially independent from politicized money. Such media is accompanied by sources, and published with the aim of benefitting society, and not attracting attention or gaining followers. It is neutral media that discusses issues from different points of view. Independent media that are not affiliated with political or religious parties.

Syrians believe that independent media has a potentially important role to play in society and the media can serve to bridge intergenerational differences. Independent media is widely understood as being free from the influence of government, free from bias and free to discuss any topic. However, some still believe that there is no such thing as independent media in Syria, as media outlets operate towards achieving their own goals or presenting particular perspectives. There is some interest in solutions journalism, accountability journalism, and long-form journalism, but there are also some concerns that these approaches conflict with the current interest in fast-breaking news. There is also concern that such approaches may increase tensions because probing into past issues and actions may hinder

communities from moving forward.

Youth view themselves as under-represented in Syrian media and tell us that they feel stereotyped. Interviewees said that they now see more women represented in the Syrian media. However, both youth and females do not believe their interests are covered by traditional media, whereas their high use of social media occurs because their interests are better referenced through these platforms.

There is some evidence that Syrians are enacting “news avoidance” because they are exhausted from negative news, propaganda and fake news. The earthquake in South-eastern Turkey and Northern Syria added to the hardships of people who had already experienced 12 years of war. Syrians used social media to gain information about the earthquake, and appreciated news coverage that did not split the country in opposing regions, and instead focused on the human story for the nation as a whole. They noticed a proliferation of new media and social media sources covering the earthquake while also noticing that many of these newer outlets were less credible. The perceived lack of credibility is likely linked with the high volume of citizen-generated coverage of the earthquake that had not undergone fact checking or verification. This led to Syrians preferring to stay loyal to familiar and trusted news sources.

There were differences across gender and age in the survey and interview responses, with youth (under 30) reporting almost no television, radio or news website news consumption, reflecting their low engagement with traditional media channels. The interviews also told us that youth respondents feel as though they are stereotyped

by the media, whereas female respondents often feel largely ignored. For news topics, all respondents reported to have interest in news about economics (exchange rates), employment and migration. Study participants told us that they choose messaging apps because they know that many of their friends and family may have low levels of literacy, especially in the last decade as many people left school early. Youth feel overwhelmed with bad news and do not want to spend too much time reading in-depth or lengthy analysis that may focus on blame, conflict or increase tensions due to the profound political fractures between communities.

Surveys and interviews with women show a greater interest in television than males, and that they are seeking for more media coverage of issues important to them. They use fewer social media platforms and use them less frequently than their male counterparts. But many report using Instagram frequently. If media outlets want to reach women, they need to use the platforms that women prefer and cover topics of interest to women.

### 1.3. Summary Recommendations

- There are several emergent recommendations based on the 2023 audience research. Syrians have shifted to social media and messaging apps as their primary channel for accessing news information. They also value the privacy that messaging apps can give them. However, this means that they do not go directly to any news sites and thus may not know the actual source of news content. Media outlets should work to ensure that their stories are branded, link back to their social media hashtags or accounts, and create sharable content for the most popularly

used social media and apps. Media outlets can capitalise on the unique features of each platform by tailoring content for each channel. To leverage the unique features, media outlets may need to develop content strategies for each platform and use content calendars to deliver content at the best time for each audience. In the NES area, some preferences for television and video platforms emerged, suggesting that media should include visual components to stories.

- Media outlets should consider how to integrate fact-checking into their stories and engagement with audiences. Syrians trust content from their friends and family. There are opportunities for media literacy, critical thinking and recommendations for what audiences can do to fact-check and reduce the spread of dis- and misinformation in their social networks.

- Media outlets should consider ways to achieve the same end goal of long-form journalism and solutions-journalism through shorter but more frequent news items. Such opportunities may require delivering regularly occurring short-form stories that together add up to a longer, solution-based story.

- Media outlets should continue to focus on high quality, credible, and neutral news content that builds on the existing levels of trust. Established outlets are more trusted than newer outlets.

- Youth reported that they feel marginalised in society and do not see their interests represented in the traditional media. Media outlets should consider ways to engage youth in stories that meet their interests - local news, economic news, and employment. We also listened to women's

voices in the interviews and survey responses. They too want more representation in the media and information that responds to their interests in entertainment, fashion and culture.

- In terms of methodological lessons learned, this year's research did not include diaries or viewing panels, and future research should consider another way to gather in-depth experiences of Syrians in how they engage with media. One approach would be to undertake confidential online viewing groups where participants are shown different source content and discuss their preferences and reactions. These types of additional methods add a granularity to the insights that can be derived regarding audience behaviours. Online surveys replaced face-to-face surveys and interviews. This proved to be a practical method for data collection.

- It is recommended that future research should examine more closely the way that Syrians interact with social media platforms and messaging apps to obtain news and information and the extent to which content they consume and share is trusted and from reputable sources. If assessed to be context sensitive, this research could possibly follow an ethnographic design where a researcher would spend time with different audience members to understand how and why they interact with different media platforms, both digital and traditional.

- Overall, we see an evolving situation of Syrian interests and definitions of independent media. Independent media are valued. There is consistent positive valuation of independent media and support for its growing. It will be important to differentiate media outlets with

interest in independent news content from others, and there exist opportunities for such media outlets to create engagement, dialogue and peace building through their social media channels. The earthquake brought Syrians together and they stopped thinking of Governments and opposition dualities. Other events could also bring Syrians together as a people and the media have a role in telling the national story that brings people together again.

## **2. Background**

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Free Press Unlimited (FPU)'s vision is to assist the development of the independent media landscape from a holistic point of view, and in a demand driven way. In support of the idea that media and journalism play a significant role in terms of providing timely, credible, and fact-based news and information to those affected by the conflict, FPU provides financial support, technical assistance, and other types of media development support to aid and support journalists, media outlets and media institutions to foster and deliver independent news and information.

FPU's work is based on its mission that all people are entitled to have access to unbiased, reliable and timely information. This enables them to assess their own living conditions, influence these and make the right decisions. With its programme Cohesion through Independent and Inclusive Media (CIIM) (2021-2024), FPU supports a holistic approach to assist independent media outlets, institutions, individual professionals, civil society organisations and youth focused initiatives towards solution-driven initiatives



to foster cohesion amongst Syrian audiences. This was preceded by the five-year long Ethical Journalism for Syrian Media (EJSM) programme. CIIM works with strategic partners to shape these partnerships under three strategic objectives: to develop effective accountability mechanisms, promote ethical journalism, and work towards inclusive solutions for Syrian society.

A strong and independent media in the context of war and instability is, in one sense, an indispensable bulwark against propaganda and misinformation; in another, it represents one aspect of what a democratic and peaceable society looks like. This audience research study is another component of FPU's long-term commitment to the development of an ethical and independent media sector in Syria, which enables an environment conducive to Freedom of Expression and Freedom of Speech, where the media serves the interests of the public and where journalists and media experts can work professionally and effectively without fear.

## 2.1. Project Background

FPU has contracted Jouri Research and Consulting to conduct an audience research study of Syrian media consumers inside Syria. The main objective of this audience research study is to contribute to fulfilling the information needs of Syrians by providing them with accurate, balanced, timely and relevant information within an effective, organised, and professional media landscape. This includes identifying the media consumption patterns and information needs of Syrian audiences, so as to better understand the impact of media in all of its forms on Syrian audiences. The research study aims to provide

FPU with insights into Syrian's consumption habits, their information needs, their perceptions and attitudes towards the media they consume. It will also examine the role that independent media plays in their daily lives, with a particular focus on youth. The data will assess how youth perceive the media they consume and how they view their representation within the Syrian media landscape. Above all, the study aims to better understand the impact of media in all its forms - local, national, international, partisan and independent - on Syrian audiences.

FPU, its donor representatives, as well media associations, editors, and journalists and other relevant stakeholders can benefit from this research through gaining perspectives on a diversity of audience groups in Syria. The findings of this research will also help to inform independent media organisations of how they are perceived by their audience, which will in turn enable FPU and its donors to better evaluate the extent of their success in supporting and strengthening these independent media outlets.

The study was based on the following research questions:

**1) Assess the media consumption patterns and preferences of Syrian audiences (time, device, frequency, location, format, content online, offline) and with whom they share news information with, before and after the 2023 earthquake, in order to track changes in consumption habits, platform and outlets utilised as well as levels of interactivity.**

- Which mobile applications were used for sharing the news and what is the preferable way

to share news per age group and gender prior to the 2023 earthquake? How did this change as a result of the disaster?

- Which networks do people share the news through and what is the preferable media (or other offline) channel to use while sharing news per age group and gender prior to the 2023 earthquake? How did this change as a result of the disaster?

- Were people more interactive on social media - i.e. sharing news and information - as a result of the 2023 earthquake? Is this likely to continue or will they soon fall back into previous consumer patterns?

## **2) What are the news and information needs of Syrian audiences?**

- What are local, regional/national and international needs and consumption patterns?

- What are the interests of an audience member, who has a low or non-existent news consumption habits?

- What are the news needs and consumption patterns of Syrian youth and women?

- Does the news information carried by social media platforms cover the news and information needs of the Syrian audience? How far or to what extent?

## **3) How do Syrian audiences interpret the term 'independent media'?**

- Do Syrian audiences recognize articles focused on "solutions" to problems and do

they appreciate them, and are they moved to consider, learn, and share this type of media?

- Has there been any noticeable change here, as a result of the 2023 earthquake?

## **4) How do Syrian youth and women see their representation in the produced news content by the media?**

## **5) What levels of trust do Syrian audiences have in a range of online and offline news and information sources, including independent media?**

- What are the attitudes of Syrian audiences towards content that is deemed to be partisan versus content that is deemed to be more balanced?

## **6) What role does independent and/or state media play in their daily lives, if any?**

## **7) How does the Syrian audience see that 'accountability driven content' has contributed to help them manage their daily life struggles?**

## **8) How and to what extent has independent media supported cohesion, dialogue and peacebuilding among Syrian audiences?**

The intended users of the answers of this study will be media organisations media outlets including journalists, editors, and media associations, other relevant stakeholders such as NGOs and donors who engage with media and civil society in Syria, FPU, and the Swedish International Development Association (SIDA).

FPU intends to use this study to understand trends, conditions and needs, support Syrian media organisations' work, future program design, and also to be leveraged for partnership, outreach to donors as well as for public policy papers.

### **3. Methodology and Sampling**

Originally, the audience research was scheduled for January and February 2023 but was delayed until March 2023. This year's study is contextualised by the 7.8 magnitude earthquake in South-eastern Turkey and Northern Syria on 6th February 2023. It led to an adaptation of this research study to include media coverage of the disaster as experienced by Syrian audience members.

The study was conducted across 10 different locations inside Syria to gain a diverse range of perspectives from Syrian audience groups, focusing on individuals with different religious, political, ethnic and social backgrounds as well as age, gender and education differences. Some adjustments in the research locations were made due to the impact of the earthquake.

Combining qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection, the design of this research study applied a mixed-method approach and conducted two types of data collection across 10 locations: in-depth interviews and surveys. The mixed-method approach enabled triangulation between the perspectives and insights of media experts and audience members participating in interviews, with the data collected through the audience survey. In addition to triangulation, the qualitative interviews provided deeper

contextual understanding for answering relevant research questions such as understanding the contribution of 'accountability driven content' in helping Syrians manage their daily life struggles.

The ongoing conflict has divided the country for several years into approximately defined areas of control. The current territorial boundaries have created different political and socioeconomic realities with implications on media professional standards, working conditions, policies (or absence of such), freedom of press and the overall civic liberties. The country is divided into the following geographic areas of control:

#### **North-East Syria**

- North-Eastern Syria comprises the region formerly controlled by ISIS. The region includes the governorates of Ar-Raqqa, Deir Ez Zor and Hasaka. Most of the NES's land mass was under ISIS control until 2017. These Governorates are currently controlled by Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), although smaller parts are controlled by Government of Syria (GoS) and Turkish-supported rebel forces (effectively under Turkish control). The key humanitarian access to this region is through the cross-border operations via Erbil, Iraq.

- ISIS presence remains in this part of the country, and in December 2022, the SDF launched "Al Jazeera Thunderbolt" Operation in the countryside of Hasaka and Qamishli across 55 villages and farms to root out ISIS sleeper cells which were forming there.

#### **North-West Syria**

- The northwest, including northern areas of Idlib

province, is predominantly under the control of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). It is noteworthy that Idlib is one of Syria's smallest governorates, which has been enlarged by the addition of territory from western Aleppo by rebel forces after the uprising turned into conflict. The area's resources are under full capacity and overstretched by the large numbers of IDPs.

## **Central & Southern Syria**

- The Southern and Central areas of Syria including Damascus, Sweida, and Dar'a are currently under government control, with the exception of a small region in the southeast which is currently controlled by US backed anti-government rebels.
- The frequent influxes of IDPs from areas affected by the conflict into Damascus have overstretched the city infrastructure and increased the severity of humanitarian needs.

## **2.2. Data collection**

The research team employed a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods to gain insights.

### **2.2.1. Online In-depth Interviews (IDIs)**

The total sample of 40 IDIs provided an in-depth examination of the participants' perceptions, behaviours and expectations of media in Syria. The method of selection used short recruitment interviews to ensure a representative sample.

### **2.2.2. Online Audience Surveys**

Jouri conducted 1,200 audience surveys in 10 locations. The format was face to face interviewing

with the enumerator entering data in the KoBo online survey tool. The survey targeted those in the following age ranges: 16-20, 21-30, 31-39, 40-49, 50+ with approximately 40% of surveyed respondents being youth (16-24).

### **2.2.3. Sampling**

The samples for the in-depth interviews were based on a variety of sampling methods. The participants of the in-depth interviews were selected through a combination of snowball sampling along with quota sampling, to ensure a level of generalizability of the findings. The field team was instructed to recruit a diverse sample based on the agreed upon sampling, and each member of the field team made a judgement of where to start and shared their rationale with technical staff.

Due to the impact of the recent 7.8 magnitude earthquake in NWS, some adjustments have been made to the sample sizes as well as the areas of focus in Idlib and Aleppo governorates. The sample size for NWS was reduced by 50%, with the extra participants carried over into other locations as reflected below. Furthermore, the target locations within Idlib and Aleppo were confined to 'safer' areas relatively unaffected by the earthquake. These included Idlib city centre, Azaz and Afrin.

### **2.2.4. Media Expert In-depth Interviews**

Interviews with media professionals (MP) were conducted (a proportion of MPs were selected by FPU), and MPs were selected based on their knowledge of the Syrian media sector, diversity of experience and perspective, with an equal

**Table 1:** gender and age aggregation summary for 40 In-depth Interviews

Location	Males					Females				
	16-20	21-30	31-39	40-49	51+	16-20	21-30	31-39	40-49	51+
Aleppo N= 4	1 educated under 25 1 lower educated under 25					1 educated under 25 1 educated over 25				
Damascus N= 4	1 lower educated under 25 1 educated over 25					1 lower educated under 25 1 educated over 25				
Latakya N = 4	1 educated under 25 1 educated over 25					1 educated under 25 1 educated over 25				
Idlib N = 4	1 educated over 25 1 lower educated over 25					1 educated over 25 1 educated under 25				
Sweida N = 4	1 educated under 25 1 educated over 25					1 lower educated under 25 1 educated over 25				
Dar'a N = 4	1 lower educated over 25 1 educated under 25					1 educated under 25 1 educated over 25				
Zoom in Location (NES) N = 16	1 educated under 25 1 lower educated under 25 5 educated over 25 1 lower educated over 25					1 educated under 25 1 lower educated under 25 3 educated over 25 3 lower educated over 25				

split between males and females. A snowball sampling approach recruited experts within the Syrian diaspora (some were available and willing to participate internally within the region). The interviews include a sample of participants who have participated in the previous audience research study. Interviews took place toward the latter half of the research, and interviews lasted approximately one hour. Out of the total 10 MPs, 5 were interviewed due to the timeline and limited availability of the targeted media experts.

Interviewees consisted of media experts with at least 7-10 years of continuous experience in media, with at least five of these reporting on the Syrian media context. Interviewees consisted of journalists, editors, commentators and/or broadcasters and with specialised knowledge of the media landscapes in targeted locations, and who published extensively on the media landscape and context, and/or had appeared on international media outlets to discuss

**Table 2:** percentage of males and females per age groups

Gender		Age				
Female	Male	16 to 20 years	21 to 30 years	31 to 39 years	40 to 49 years	50+ years
47%	53%	34%	27%	16%	12%	11%

the Syrian context. The participants were selected from recommendations by FPU.

### 3. Limitations and mitigation plans

There were some limitations in the timeline for the data collection. Jouri overcame this issue by increasing the number of staff in the field. Nevertheless, a number of limitations and challenges occurred and were addressed in consultation with the project coordinator. These are listed below:

- Twelve years of war has impacted the majority

of citizens across the country and the levels of trust in research projects for participants living in Syria (especially those amongst the older age groups) was low due to the continuous hardships and highly politicised context. Jouri's field team clarified the purpose of the research and the importance of their participation to ensure the findings and recommendations are informed by their voices and contextualised. All respondents participated voluntarily.

- The original methodology was designed prior to the earthquake, and so by the time of data collection some adjustments to the sample needed to be made. The sample size

**Table 3:** Survey Locations and Sample Sizes

Location	Gender			Education level			Age				
	Total	Female	Male	Higher than secondary education	Secondary education	Lower education levels	16-20 years	21-30 years	31-39 years	40-49 years	50+ years
Aleppo	114	62	52	76	20	18	30	40	15	12	17
Ar-Raqqa	140	78	62	68	31	41	49	30	25	20	16
Damascus	144	62	82	23	63	58	63	35	15	19	12
Dar'a	114	57	57	55	41	18	42	35	13	12	12
Deir Ez Zor	219	33	186	79	83	57	65	41	65	39	9
Hasaka	145	107	38	97	14	34	49	49	11	2	34
Idlib	62	32	30	35	16	11	18	16	12	10	6
Latakya	118	58	60	68	38	12	43	28	16	14	17
Rural Damascus	26	19	7	6	13	7	10	5	8	3	0
Sweida	118	60	58	66	45	7	42	40	14	10	12

for NWS, as the severely impacted region by earthquake, was reduced by 50%, with the extra participants carried over into other locations as reflected in the table above. Interviews and surveys were conducted online as a result of the earthquake.

- Conducting face to face interviews about independent media is highly sensitive in many of the locations of this study and might put the researchers and respondents at risk. Online interviews mitigated these security risks to the respondents. They were employed as a safer approach to data collection. In addition, diaries and viewing panels take a long time and are not fully suitable for data collection in a politicized and conflict affected context. The team employed in-depth interviews that provide similar insights.

- A number of Syrians in the targeted regions are returnees or living in camps for the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Syria at the time of the data collection. Due to limited availability of the basic services such as electricity, some of the interviewees were unable to provide informed insights. This was mitigated by a robust triangulation of data at multiple levels across methods and data sources.

- The target number of respondents from the media professionals was partially achieved. This was largely due to the limited availability of the media professionals for interviewing within the timeframe for data collection. This was mitigated by receiving feedback via an online co-creation presentation of preliminary research findings with the presence of FPU and other key media outlets.

## 4. Findings

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### 4.1. Research Question 1

**RQ1: Assess the media consumption patterns and preferences of Syrian audiences (time, device, frequency, location, format, content online, offline) and with whom they share news information with, before and after the 2023 earthquake, in order to track changes in consumption habits, platform and outlets utilised as well as levels of interactivity.**

#### 4.1.1. Pre-earthquake findings (6th February 2023)

The data to answer this research question was triangulated from the IDIs and surveys. The increased ownership and use of smartphones over recent years, in combination with their lack of a constant source of electricity, and distrust in official, government regulated traditional media (e.g., TV), has resulted in the continued increase in the access of digital platforms by Syrians to consume news. Indeed, the use of mobile platforms to access news now overshadows that of televisual and radio platforms. Use of the internet as an information portal, and in parallel with social media, has led to a more fluid culture of consumption habits, where Syrians move between different sources and absorb and interact with a variety of voices and opinions.

In the 1,200 surveys that were conducted, the majority (60%) of respondents use social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter more than three times a day to access news. Accessing news items via social media platforms is favoured due to the habitual, daily use of such platforms and therefore ease of access they provide to

news, and how stories can be shared with family and friends. In terms of how news content is accessed via social media platforms, the most common method is by checking the content (i.e. video, audio, articles) as posted by friends on Facebook (42%), followed by checking posts of followed news outlets (36%) and by checking news information written by friends in publicly posted messages on Facebook (35%). Males (49%) are more likely to check news-related posts of friends on Facebook than females (34%), whereas females (41%) are more likely than males (27%) to check news information that has been publicly posted by friends on Facebook.

**Messaging apps** such as WhatsApp, Telegram, Viber and SMS, were the second-most used with

27% of respondents, higher amongst the youth (36%) engaging 3 or more times per day. This represents a switch from the 2020 research, where messaging apps were most used (67%) and social media second most used (51%). Both social media platforms and messaging apps not only act as a facilitator of news consumption, but are also a medium through which friends and families discuss news stories. There is also a gender dimension with both these mediums overall, with a distinct majority of men favouring news via messaging apps (48% men vs 19% women), and a somewhat lesser majority preferring to access news via social media (87% men vs. 78% women). IDIs answers provided triangulation of these findings. Respondents told us that they use these apps for easier and more

**Table 4:** How participants gain news information from social media

Row Labels	I check posts (videos/articles/audio) shared by friends on Facebook	I check news information written by friends in a publicly posted message on Facebook	I check posts of news outlets that I follow when they appear in my news feed on Facebook
16 to 20 years	44%	43%	35%
21 to 30 years	45%	29%	38%
31 to 39 years	35%	26%	34%
40 to 49 years	51%	34%	45%
50+ years	30%	35%	30%
Grand Total	42%	35%	36%
Female	34%	27%	34%
Male	49%	41%	38%
Grand Total	42%	35%	36%



secure communication. A male from Ar-Raqqa told us: "I prefer the WhatsApp and Facebook applications because they are more used among everyone, especially WhatsApp, where I can communicate with people who cannot read and write, through audio recordings."

Geographically, there are some distinct patterns of higher and lower use of platforms across the surveyed locations and regions:

- Highest use of messaging apps for accessing news is in Deir Ez Zor (68%), Idlib (45%) and Ar-Raqqa (41%), while the lowest is in Rural Damascus (0%), Damascus (3%) and Hasaka (9%).
- Highest use of social media platforms for accessing news is in Damascus (99%), Rural Damascus (86%) and Latakya (96%), while the lowest is in Hasaka (53%), Ar-Raqqa (74%) and Deir Ez Zor (78%).
- Highest use of television for accessing news is in Hasaka (63%), and the lowest is in Idlib (2%), Rural Damascus (4%) and Damascus (8%).
- Highest use of video platforms for accessing news is Hasaka (43%), by some margin.

Video platforms such as YouTube were the third-most used among surveyed respondents but audiences are using video platforms less frequently, with only a small percentage (7%) of respondents using the platform 3 or more times per day. Overall, the majority of respondents use a mix of platforms and sources to access news, with the majority accessing news content via smartphones due to high rates of device ownership, the ease of access, and the

lack of reliance on an ongoing electric power supply (unlike other devices, such as television screens). Television news appears to have become less favoured, as it is largely controlled by the government and is therefore viewed as inherently biased. While bias is also understood as affecting social media news content, there is a wariness associated with television news as both biased and 'hyped', with a tendency to amplify news stories to capture attention. One female from Hasaka told us that she prefers "News applications on the phone because the difficult conditions in the country have made television a secondary device."

While news content accessed via social media apps is appreciated for its immediacy, this is also accompanied by a cognisance that comments of other users will likely represent a range of views and opinions that may not align with their own.

In terms of preferences around accessing news 'from the source' as opposed to it being provided via social media channels, the majority of surveyed respondents prefer receiving this from source as this is perceived as less adulterated (i.e. less biased), and therefore more credible, accurate and current. Respondents in Deir Ez Zor prefer it from source as they believe formal news providers and social media channels are more likely to distort the news item to reflect their political agenda.

#### **4.1.2. Post-earthquake findings (6th February 2023)**

Overall, findings do not show any significant changes in the devices and media channels being used by respondents in the period

leading up to, and following, the devastating earthquake of 6th February 2023, with a general continuation of the same patterns already described (Figure 1).

There is also a slight but tangible decrease in the level of perceived need to access news across various video platforms and messaging apps, for audiences in pre and post-earthquake data collection (Figure 2), and an increase in need for news via more traditional media channels (print TV, radio). There is also an increase in the perceived need for news obtained online through news websites, likely linked to Syrians looking for trusted and up to date content that is easily accessible when they need it, day or night. The IDIs told us

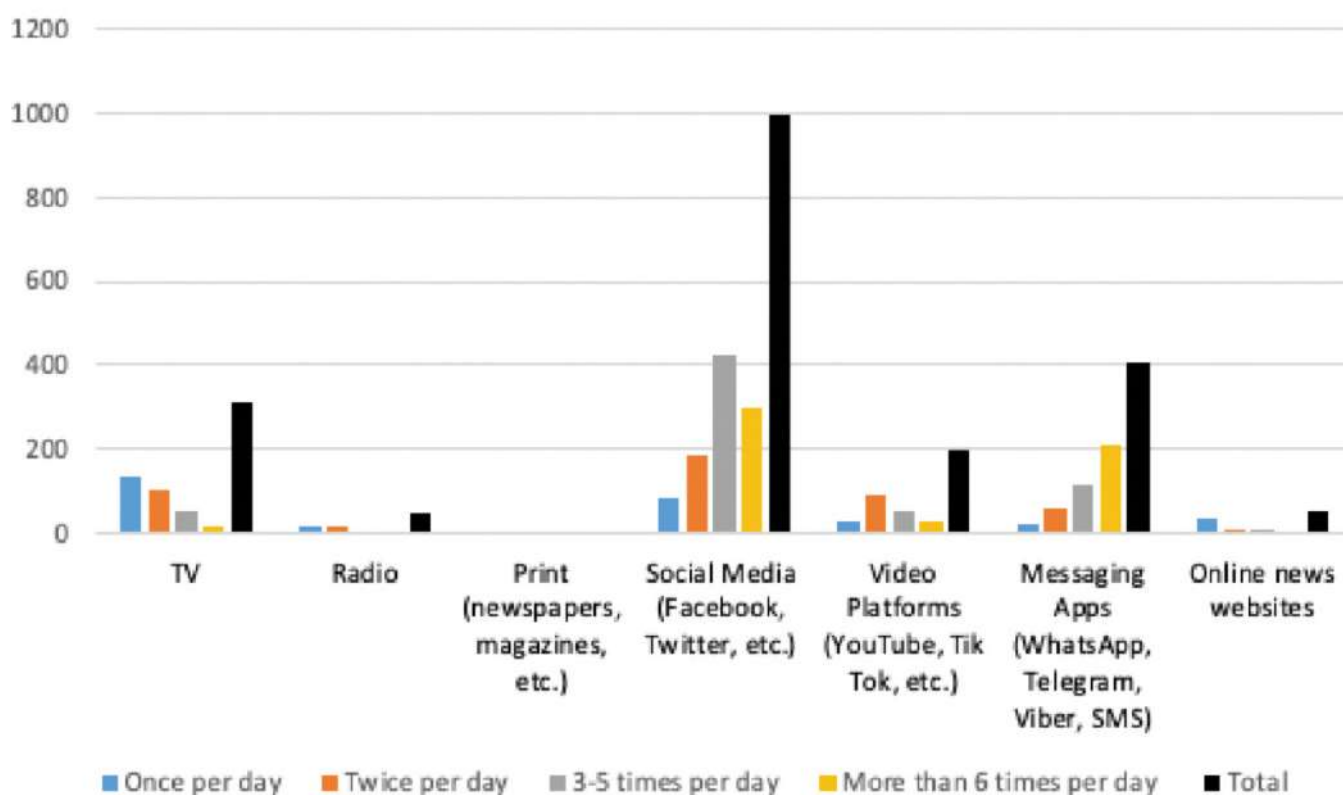
that “news websites carried more credibility, and sometimes were faster in delivering the news.”

Regarding news consumption habits pre- and post-earthquake, there is a similar balance (as to pre-earthquake) in terms of those favouring accessing news via social media due to the perception of speed of reporting, and those opting for traditional television coverage.

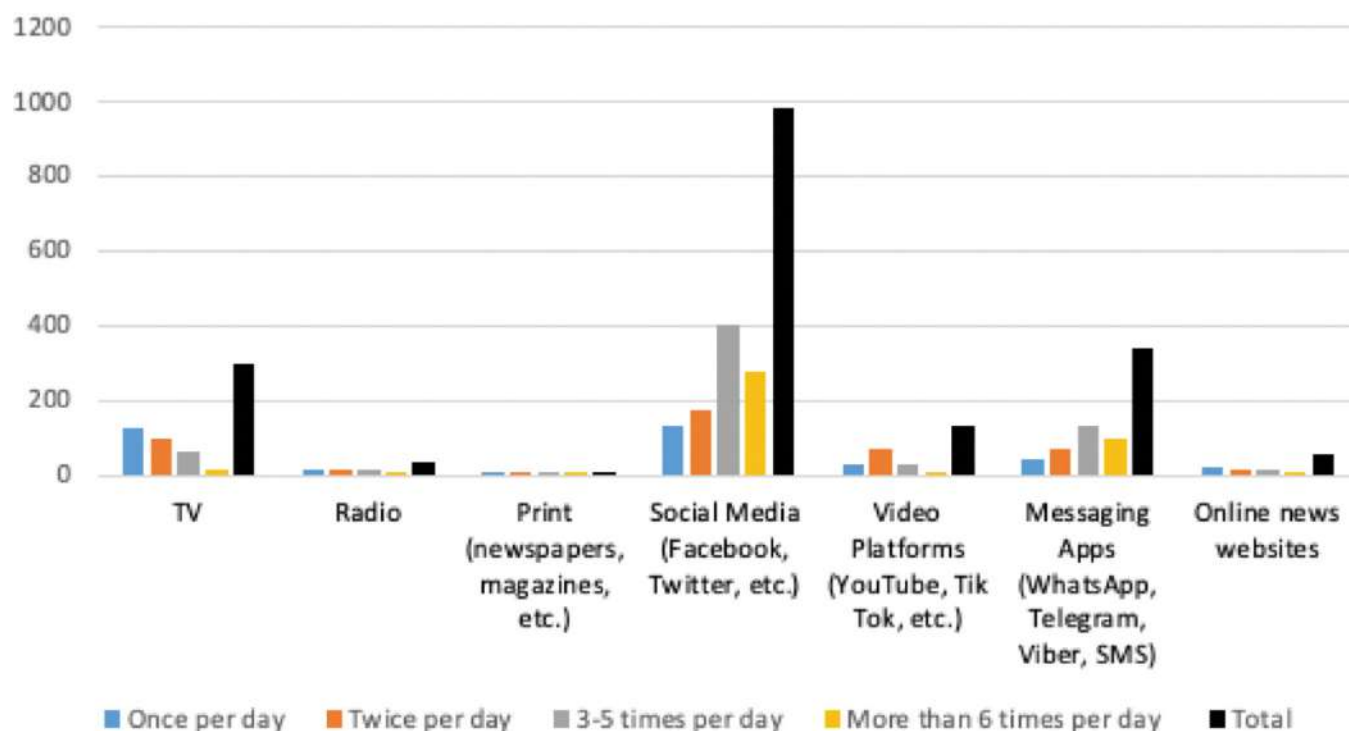
The overall tendency to access news via social media still dominates, as it is viewed as more nimble and more likely to provide instant updates, which is considered important in an event such as a large earthquake (news of aftershocks, emergency response, etc.).

**Figure 1.** Frequency of accessing news content pre- (left) and post- (right) earthquake (N= 1200).

### Frequency of accessing news content (pre-earthquake)



## Frequency of accessing news content (post-earthquake)



It is evident that Syrians are living and communicating through social media and messaging apps, whereas the traditional media of print, radio and television are no longer dominant. With such dependence on social media and messaging apps, Syrians access fast breaking news from multiple sources. The credibility of these sources ranges from those featuring intentional mis- and disinformation, to local, national, regional and international news. Very few people report going directly to a news website and instead access their news content through content shared on Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp.

While social media dominates Syrian's consumption of media, there is a range of usage from a low of 74% of the sample in Ar-Raqqa to a high of 99% in Damascus. Social media

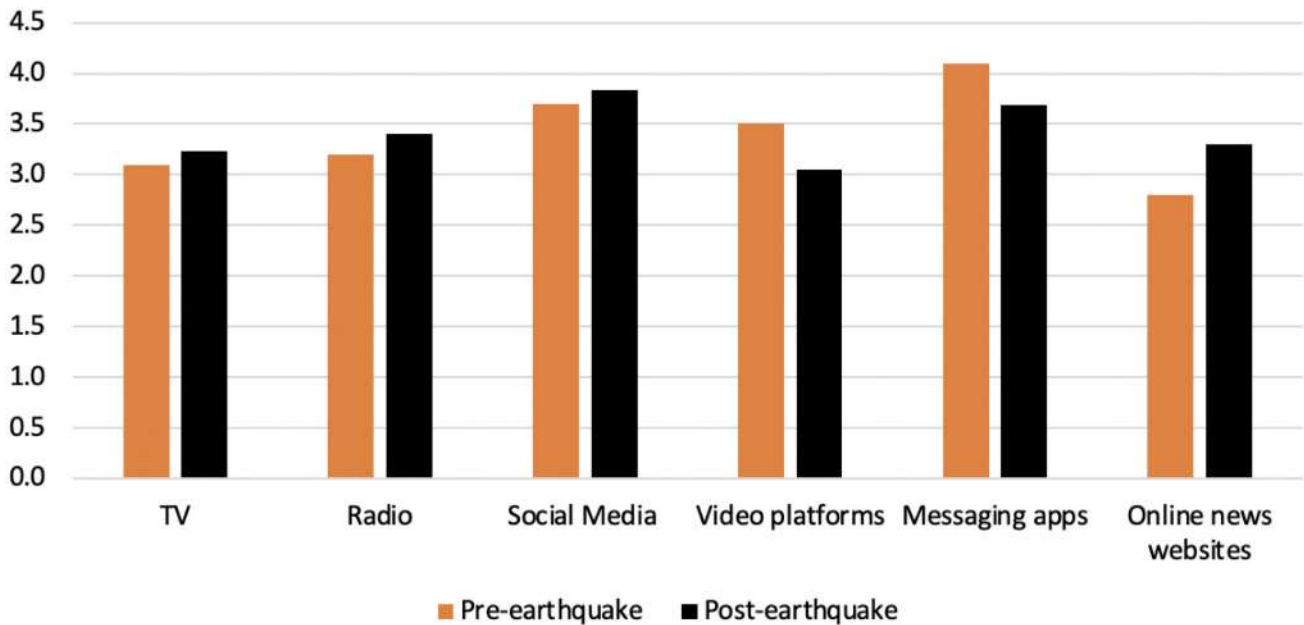
use is slightly higher among males ( $M= 3.9/5$ ) than females ( $M= 3.5/5$ ). Across age groups, social media is highest with those aged under 20, but relatively equally across the other four age groups.

Messaging apps are also a popular way for Syrians to access media content. They were rated higher as needed than social media. Deir Ez Zor has a high use of messaging apps (68%) adaption. People in the 31-39 age range report that they need messaging apps the most and people over 50 years of age report the least dependence on messaging apps.

Video platforms have emerged as useful tools for media consumption for those under 20 but they have not really penetrated the other age groups. Deir Ez Zor has a high use of video platforms (42%).

**Figure 2.** Perceived level of need to access news items across different media channels - pre and post-earthquake. Rating key - 5 = high level of need, 0 = low level of need (N=1,200).

**Rating of level of need for news in daily life, across media channels - pre and post earthquake**



Television is a popular source for media consumption in Hasaka and Sweida. Over 77% of respondents reported that they watch television news once or twice a day, and this audience is generally older (40+). Radio has a smaller audience, with the majority of listeners aged 40 and older. Approximately 82% of the sample listens to radio once or twice a day, perhaps when driving. Radio was not identified as a 'needed' media platform and when it was, the respondents were generally male and aged 40+.

Print media is not consumed regularly and when it is, the target audience is usually male and aged in their 40s. It is the least needed media.

Syrians are not accessing specialist, online

media news sites very often, with only two audiences visiting them most frequently: young people aged under 20 and people over 50 years of age. Online news sites are the second least important media channel for news and information after print.

Overall, the data suggests that social media and digital formats are the dominant forms of media consumption in Syria, particularly among younger generations who tend to be more tech-savvy.

The aftermath of the 2023 earthquake made it even more important for Syrians to have access to credible information. The table below shows the media type that Syrians are using for news and information (Table 5).

**Table 5:** Usage of media to access news content, by location (N=1,200).

Location	TV	Radio	Print	Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	Video Platforms (YouTube, Tik Tok, etc.)	Messaging Apps (WhatsApp, Telegram, Viber, SMS)	Online news websites
Aleppo	33%	3%	0%	92%	11%	27%	2%
Ar-Raqqa	32%	0%	1%	74%	11%	41%	2%
Damascus	8%	9%	0%	99%	5%	3%	3%
Dar'a	21%	3%	0%	80%	11%	52%	9%
Deir Ez Zor	22%	2%	1%	78%	43%	68%	4%
Hasaka	63%	1%	0%	53%	8%	9%	2%
Idlib	2%	2%	0%	95%	8%	45%	0%
Latakya	16%	5%	0%	96%	19%	22%	2%
R u r a l Damascus	4%	12%	0%	96%	0%	0%	0%
Sweida	26%	10%	2%	93%	16%	36%	19%

Approximately 26% of the sample still obtain their information from television, with respondents from Hasaka informing us that while 63% rely on television, only 8% use video-based platforms and 9% use messaging apps to get their news. There is almost no use of print newspapers or magazines. Radio use is mostly used in rural Damascus and Damascus but the levels are still quite low.

The respondents consult various channels throughout the day. Table 6 below provides insights into the frequency of media use.

Approximately 60% of the sample use social media more than three times a day (compared to 51% in the 2020 research). Youth and people under 30 use social media the most. IDIs told us that news from social media is “fast,” “can be shared quickly” and can be “verified.”

Nearly 17% report using video platforms for news which is nearly the same as the 2020 audience study (16%). Online news sites, newspapers and radio are not accessed often

during the day, and television is typically accessed once or twice per day.

Social media platforms have become even more prevalent in Syria over the last two years, with 78% of the respondents continuing to use Facebook. Over 48% now use the messaging app WhatsApp for communication, whereas Twitter and TikTok are used much less often.

To gain additional insights, we disaggregated the data by gender. Males and females have similar social media preferences, and Facebook has almost identical use rates: males, 77%, females, 78%. Small differences include 1) women use Instagram more than men 2) Twitter appears to largely be used by men; 3) Telegram and WhatsApp have a slightly higher use by men. TikTok is used a bit more by men than women.

We also asked respondents about their consumption pattern during and after the earthquake. For news coverage about the earthquake, respondents turned to social

**Table 6:** Frequency in use of media to access news content, by media platform (n=1,200).

Frequency	TV	Radio	Print	Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	Video Platforms (YouTube, Tik Tok, etc.)	Messaging Apps (WhatsApp, Telegram, Viber, SMS)	Online news websites
Once per day	134	19	4	85	29	24	34
Twice per day	105	19	1	188	89	60	8
3-5 times per day	56	5		423	54	114	12
More than 6 times per day	15	3		301	29	211	2

media (81%), messaging apps (28%) and television (25%). Over 80% of youth under 20 used social media for earthquake information and 90% of those under 30 reported using social media for earthquake news. IDIs told us they used many different sources to get earthquake news and preferred finding out what was happening from people who were in the area. Some mentioned that the earthquake coverage brought out “amateurs” and “fake news.”

In conclusion, it is evident that Syrians are living and communicating on social media and messaging apps. The traditional media of print, radio and television are no longer dominant. With such dependence on social media and messaging apps, Syrians are accessing breaking news from multiple sources. The credibility of these sources range from intentional mis- and disinformation to local, national, regional and international news. Very few people go directly to a news

**Table 7:** Use of social media to access news content, by location (n=1,200).

Location	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	Telegram	WhatsApp	Tik Tok
Aleppo	68%	3%	21%	12%	57%	2%
Ar-Raqqa	69%	1%	11%	9%	55%	3%
Damascus	97%	3%	32%	3%	7%	0%
Dar'a	69%	3%	12%	18%	71%	2%
Deir Ez Zor	71%	2%	7%	18%	66%	14%
Hasaka	77%	1%	27%	3%	71%	1%
Idlib	77%	0%	5%	5%	29%	0%
Latakya	78%	0%	21%	8%	26%	0%
Rural Damascus	96%	0%	23%	4%	4%	0%
Sweida	89%	0%	36%	12%	41%	5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>4%</b>

website and instead access their news through Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp.

## 4.2. Research Question 2

### **RQ2: What are the news and information needs of Syrian audiences?**

Syrian audiences are actively sharing and discussing news items with others, a habit which cuts across all demographics (age, gender, location). News items which are most commonly shared and discussed with others include major political events, economic trends, natural disasters (e.g. 2023 earthquake, flooding), and human interest stories, which the 2023 earthquake generated a great number of. While both men and women have interest in these news items, men are more likely to follow economic news, particularly with regard to the dire economic situation in Syria (e.g. fluctuating exchange rates). With regard to the 2023 earthquake, the slow and limited response to affected populations in NW Syria was a much-discussed news item (especially comparing it to the stronger emergency response in Turkey). As with general-interest news items, stories related to the 2023 earthquake are typically shared and discussed via messaging apps (WhatsApp) and social media platforms (Facebook).

The majority of surveyed respondents are likely to search for more information related to a news item they have just accessed, typically by browsing comments made by other readers on social media platforms, Google searches (men slightly more likely than women) and through conversations with friends and family. In terms of the topics that are most likely to prompt an additional search for information,

these tend to match those described above (political events, economic news, natural disasters) but also stories relating to culture, entertainment and fashion (women are more likely to search for information on the latter two). The main drivers for such searchers are that these stories inherently interest them (e.g., earthquake survivors), are relatable to them, and in some cases may have an impact on them (e.g., exchange rates). Some IDI respondents highlighted the value of positive, human-interest stories, against a backdrop of otherwise difficult and negative news.

Survey data suggests audiences' greatest interest in news topics (across 17 measures) relates to Syrian national news, the meeting of basic needs (food, water, shelter) and education, with the latter two ranked highest in Damascus and Idlib. The least interest in news content relates to gender issues, the environment and crime. Within this, female respondents are most interested in health and education, and least interested in crime news, whereas males are most interested in local news of the country, and least interested in gender issues. Across all these content measures, the most preferred media channel provider is social media (72%), followed by TV (10%), with the other five media channels featuring at very low levels.

In terms of news items audiences feel they need to be kept informed of, again these tend to reflect natural disasters, the security situation in Syria, events that impact on them, and human interest stories. Regarding how audiences value certain aspects of news coverage, survey data (across 16 possible responses) shows that breaking news (i.e. rapid reporting) and

new items being credible and accurate are the most highly rated elements, whereas news providing a balance of pro-Government and pro-opposition views, and news providing a forum for community discussion, are the lowest rated (particularly in Aleppo and Idlib) regarding the balance of views. There is little discernible difference in the ratings of males and females across these measures.

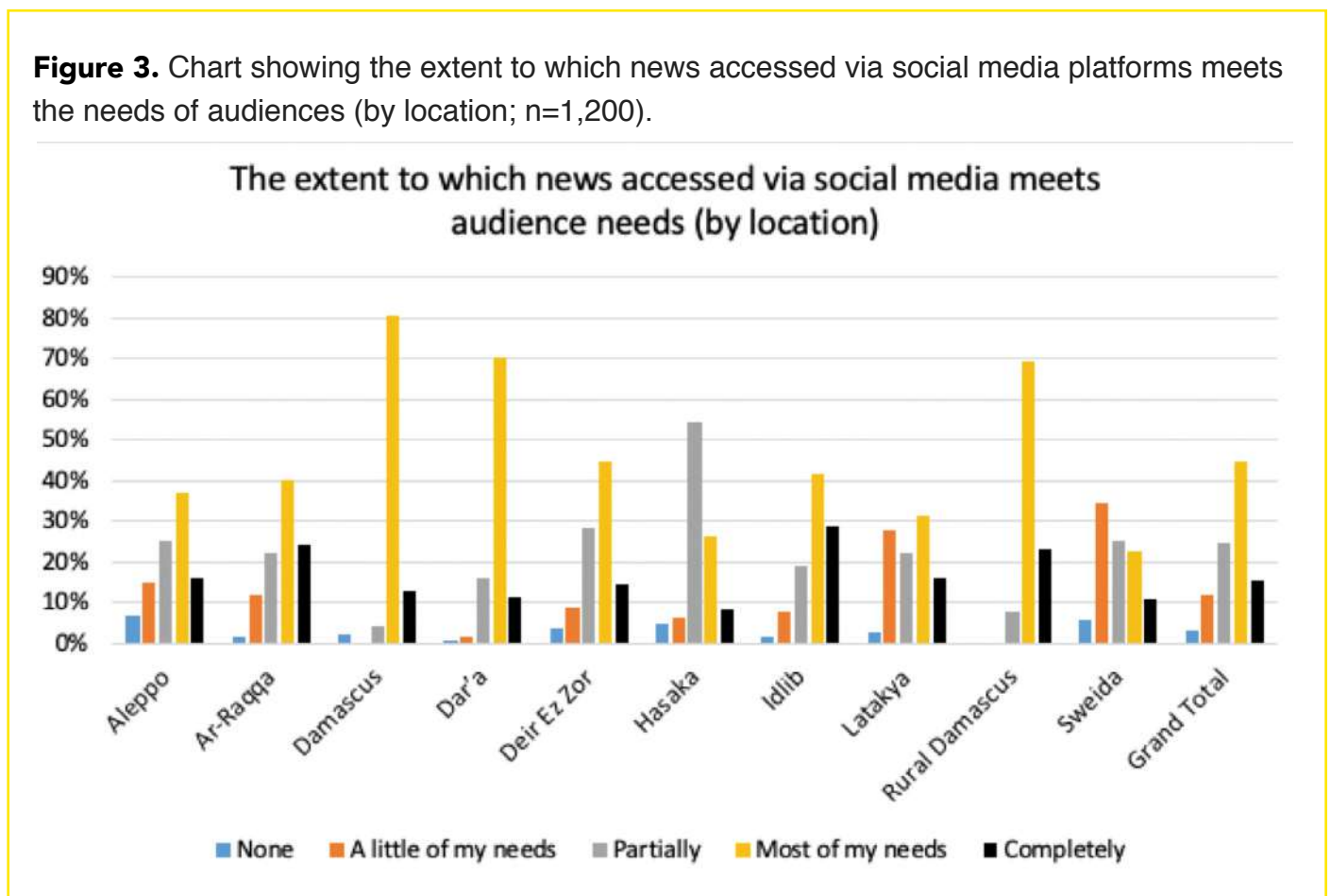
In general, the majority of surveyed audiences (60%) feel news accessed via social media fulfils their needs, due to the speed and ease of access, and the mix of serious and non-serious (i.e. culture, entertainment) news content it offers (Figure 3). The level of news needs being fulfilled is most pronounced in Damascus, Rural Damascus and Idlib.

Males reported higher levels of agreement that news accessed via social media meets their needs (Figure 4 below).

In addition, news content accessed via social media is easier to interact with and compare across platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter), which is considered useful with breaking news stories. This is accompanied by a sense that traditional Television news can be overly hyped and lead to panic and anxiety.

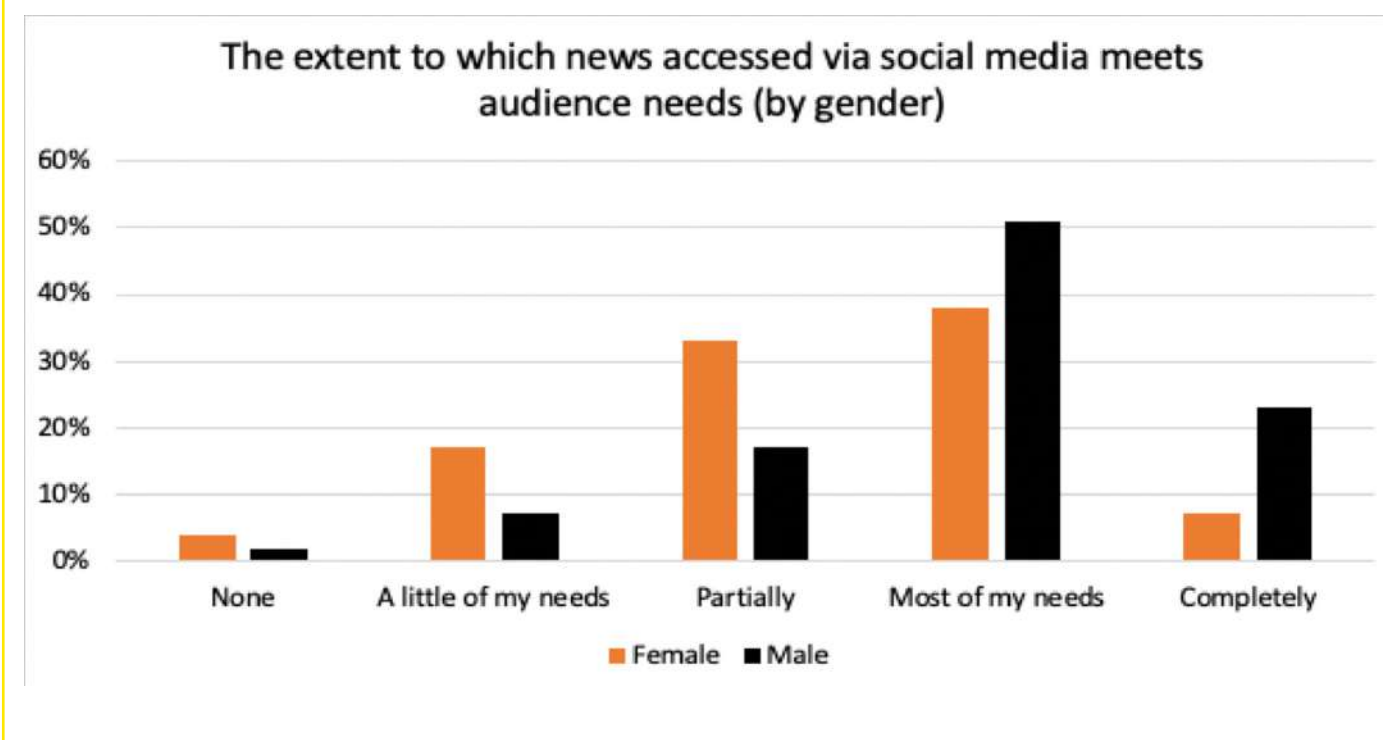
Regarding the shift from traditional news sources (television, radio, newspaper) to modern, digital channels (social media, messaging apps, websites), there is not a clear sense among respondents around the specific timeframe of this change, and

**Figure 3.** Chart showing the extent to which news accessed via social media platforms meets the needs of audiences (by location; n=1,200).





**Figure 4.** Chart showing the extent to which news accessed via social media platforms meets the needs of audiences (by gender; N=1,200).



how this has happened, but more a general acceptance that digital news is quicker and easier to access. Their popularity has largely replaced traditional channels who used to dominate new coverage, but are now considered slower and more prone to bias.

After 12 years of conflict and crisis, Syrians have significant information and news needs. And, these needs are evolving. In the 2020 audience survey, the most sought-after topics were political and security news (incl. military operations), as well as economic news and news related to basic needs (food, water, shelter). In the 2020 results, respondents' news desires also included a significant need for regional news, along with education, health and crime-related information. Surveyed participants also preferred to obtain

economic news on social media platforms the most, followed by TV.

By 2023, the topics of **local news, health, education, basic services, society and economics** were dominant in terms of news needs. They exceeded a threshold of 3.5 on a 5-point scale. Every age group reported that local news was desired and it was desired at the same level across age groups (3.6-3.7/5.0).

In 2020, Syrians informed us that they wanted more art and culture content, along with science and technology (on a scale of 1-5, accessing both these topics on social media was rated at 3.9/5 and 4.0/5). However, in 2023, these topics did not feature as highly on the list of information needs.

Interestingly, in this year's results the topic of politics, which was one of the most needed topics in 2020, did not meet the threshold for any location and any group. Very few audiences reported a high need for political news and information. Youth mostly need news about local issues and the economy, and females report a need for news about art, culture, health, education and basic needs. Only respondents in Idlib, Damascus and rural Damascus rated science and technology as a strong need. Across the respondents, males reported the highest need for local news.

Looking at the different regions, it appears that rural Damascus has the most varied and **strongest needs** for almost all topics except regional, international, and politics. Crime scored very low (2.2/5.0) as a needed topic across all locations which is different from the 2020 survey. Idlib reported some of the **lowest information needs**, particularly on health, education, basic needs and science and tech. In Aleppo, respondents seem to be avoiding news as no single new topic met the 3.5 rating threshold, meaning that the residents of Aleppo reported no distinct information needs. None of the topics garnered a mean average above 2.7 (which essentially equates to a disagree score). In the IDIs, the residents of Aleppo informed Jouri researchers that "due to psychological pressures...news greatly increased our tension" and "I don't look for news much" [Male, 22, Aleppo].

This year's data suggest that Syrians have grown weary of regional and international politics and are instead focusing inward to local issues that affect their everyday lives. This is important for FPU media outlets to consider when developing news.

#### 4.2.1. The extent to which social media fulfils information needs

In 2020, the **most-used platform** based on participants' survey answers was social media. The least-needed platform was identified as print media. In 2023, the platforms through which Syrians are meeting these needs are overwhelmingly through social media. Whereas other questions closely identified messaging apps as important, in this question sequence, social media were identified as the platform through which people met their information needs between 65-75% of the time. Television was far behind at 6-17%. As in 2020, print was the least used platform with only 1% reporting that they need television to fulfil their information needs.



The IDIs suggest that WhatsApp and Facebook are the most used social media platforms.

Syrians' needs for news have changed. Tables in annex B show levels of news needs for 2023, with percentages over 50% highlighted. Averages of needs over 3.5 on a 5-point scale, showing a trend toward perceptions of importance, have also been highlighted in yellow.

The picture emerging from tables in annex B is one of Syrian media consumers who use social media (all age groups) to access local news, health, education, basic needs and economic news. Aleppo and Dar'a have no strong preferences for news topics.

### 4.3. Research Question 3

#### **RQ3: How do Syrian audiences interpret the term 'independent media'?**

Do Syrian audiences recognize articles focused on "solutions" to problems and do they appreciate them, and are they moved to consider, learn, and share this type of media? Has there been any noticeable change here, as a result of the 2023 earthquake?

This research asked media professionals about independent media and the important role that they play in citizens' lives. While Syrian professionals believe there is an important role for independent media to play in contemporary Syria, media professionals argue that independent media should be a professional media that is not subject to partisan or governmental conditions, or conditions motivated by money or funding - i.e. they should present a message that is balanced, but not politicised.

However, the concept of independent media may have become blurred because many people have considered opposition media to be independent media. One editor noted that while the official media (state controlled) was a party to the conflict, opposition media also played a role in the conflict: "The opposition was excited, there was exaggeration, there was a major problem, which was that the media did not express the truth, but represented the represented groups, and its mission was to strengthen the rift in the conflict. We need to reinforce the importance of the existence of independent media."

There is general agreement among media professionals that independent media have contributed to providing more accurate information, but that this role must be strengthened.

In the initial 2018 FPU audience study, Syrians were asked to define 'independent media'. The key terms referenced included: neutral, critical, impartial, without an agenda, not siding with military, political or religious institutions, and transparent. In 2020, a survey question again asked Syrians to define independent media, and over 71% of surveyed respondents defined it as something that is 'free from the influence of the government', while 68% defined it as being 'free from influence by political actors, parties or interest groups.' Over 59% of respondents defined the free media by the ability to 'discuss any topic regardless of its content', while 54% defined it to be 'free from commercial interests'.

The 2023 survey data suggest that there are three major components to how Syrians interpret

the term independent media: It is interesting to note that in the 2020 audience survey, 71% of respondents defined independent media as free from the influence of government and 68% defined it as being free from influence by political actors, parties or interest groups. The 2023 survey data suggests that perceptions of independent media are evolving. There is less audience emphasis on being free of government and political influence which may reflect changes

in the availability of non-partisan content.

1) Free from influence by government (46% selected this answer).

2) Free from bias (57% selected this answer).

3) Free to discuss any topic (which is akin to freedom of expression)( 44% selected this answer).

**Table 8:** Audiences' agreement with attributes of independent media – by location / gender (n=1,200).

Locations	Free from influence by government	Free from influence of political actors, parties or interest groups	Free from commercial interests	Free from influence by the media's owner or major media corporations	Financial independence	Free to report critically	Free from bias	Free to discuss any topic	Free from adverts	Free from paywalls
Aleppo	32%	13%	18%	8%	25%	18%	47%	33%	11%	2%
Ar-Raqqa	45%	31%	21%	34%	22%	31%	42%	44%	9%	16%
Damascus	86%	27%	24%	16%	8%	31%	97%	89%	3%	9%
Dar'a	54%	53%	48%	43%	42%	32%	47%	39%	36%	26%
Deir Ez Zor	35%	29%	18%	29%	29%	26%	43%	40%	9%	8%
Hasaka	37%	10%	9%	7%	30%	14%	23%	10%	8%	9%
Idlib	89%	8%	58%	5%	69%	6%	77%	84%	15%	5%
Latakya	35%	49%	63%	42%	20%	35%	85%	59%	0%	25%
Rural Damascus	19%	8%	19%	12%	19%	0%	81%	19%	38%	0%
Sweida	29%	18%	34%	20%	21%	14%	65%	25%	8%	3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>46%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>27%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>Female</b>	35%	17%	32%	14%	22%	20%	61%	38%	10%	9%

Table 8 below presents the 2023 findings in more detail.

Males and female respondents did have slightly different perspectives of independent media. Where responses were 10% points apart or more, females were more inclined to define independence as free from bias but less likely to define independent media as free from government influence, political actors, media ownership, or be financially independent. Approximately 90% of the sample did not see independence as free from paywalls or advertising. This is encouraging in that Syrians recognize that media requires some form of economic support and that advertising or paywalls do not diminish an outlet's independence.

In the qualitative interviews with Syrians, there were mixed answers about the interpretation of the term "independent media." The majority defined "independent media" as those that do not have any bias towards any of the parties to the conflict, and media that were financially independent, impartial and unbiased to people and parties to the conflict. They were also free from commercial intertexts and transparently and without bias. It is accompanied by sources, and published with the aim of benefit, not fame or gaining followers. It is neutral media that discusses issues from different points of view. Independent media that are not affiliated with political or religious parties.

However, some were cynical about independent media, telling the interviewers that they are valued "because most of them tend to entertain". Several noted that "unfortunately, today, there is no such thing as independent media" because

"every media platform has certain goals". A common explanation for this perspective was that "most of them are biased or affiliated with a (political) party".

There appears to be a trend in the media development community to consider the normative role of solutions-driven journalism. Aitamurto and Varma<sup>1</sup> (2018) and others have offered 'solutions journalism' as a new way to consider how media can help people to live better lives. Solutions journalism is an approach to news reporting that focuses on both public responses to social issues as well as the problems themselves. A solutions story is anchored in evidence to explain how and why responses to social issues are working - or not working. This approach to journalism shifts the focus from media merely highlighting societal problems, to media providing possible solutions to these problems. Solution oriented journalists 'distance themselves from advocating for social good and claim to objectively cover solutions without endorsing them' (Aitamurto & Varma, p. 2018).

When the Syrian respondents in this study were asked about solution focused journalism, most said that they prefer the news that focuses on solutions to the problems they face. They see the purpose of the media as not only to be informative, but also to be corrective. In other words, the media can help solve problems. One interviewee said, "in general, I think that most of us prefer news that focuses on solutions to the problems we face, because it is frustrating and arousing negative feelings to present an event or problems without presenting a solution to them" (IDI I12).

1 Aitamurto, T., & Varma, A. (2018). The constructive role of journalism: Contentious meta discourse on constructive journalism and solutions journalism. *Journalism Practice*, 12(6), 695-713.

**Table 9:** Audience responses to the statement “It is important for me to consume news that offers a solutions approach”- by location (n=1,200).

Location	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree
Aleppo	50%	11%	32%	6%	2%
Ar-Raqqa	40%	6%	26%	28%	1%
Damascus	69%	0%	2%	29%	0%
Dar’a	63%	6%	22%	9%	0%
Deir Ez Zor	54%	5%	25%	16%	0%
Hasaka	30%	2%	54%	14%	0%
Idlib	56%	3%	19%	21%	0%
Latakya	50%	2%	4%	43%	1%
Rural Damascus	65%	0%	12%	23%	0%

Over 73% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed to the statement “it is important for me to consume news that offers a solutions approach” (Table 9). Damascus, Sweida and Rural Damascus showed the highest level of agreement to the statement, whereas Aleppo had the highest level of disagreement, with 13% of the respondents disagreeing or strongly disagreeing.

However, solutions journalism may be a challenging sell to audiences who have become accustomed to fast-breaking news. Solutions journalism takes longer to develop and many interviewees said: “I prefer (to receive) the news as soon as it happens”. This highlights an interesting tension between a social media savvy group of people who have come to expect fast news, as shared by friends and which gives them a sense of “being there”, versus thoughtful, long-form journalism that requires time, multiple fact bases, interviews and analysis. There is recognition of the value of solutions journalism but it is competing for the attention of people who want fast, breaking news.

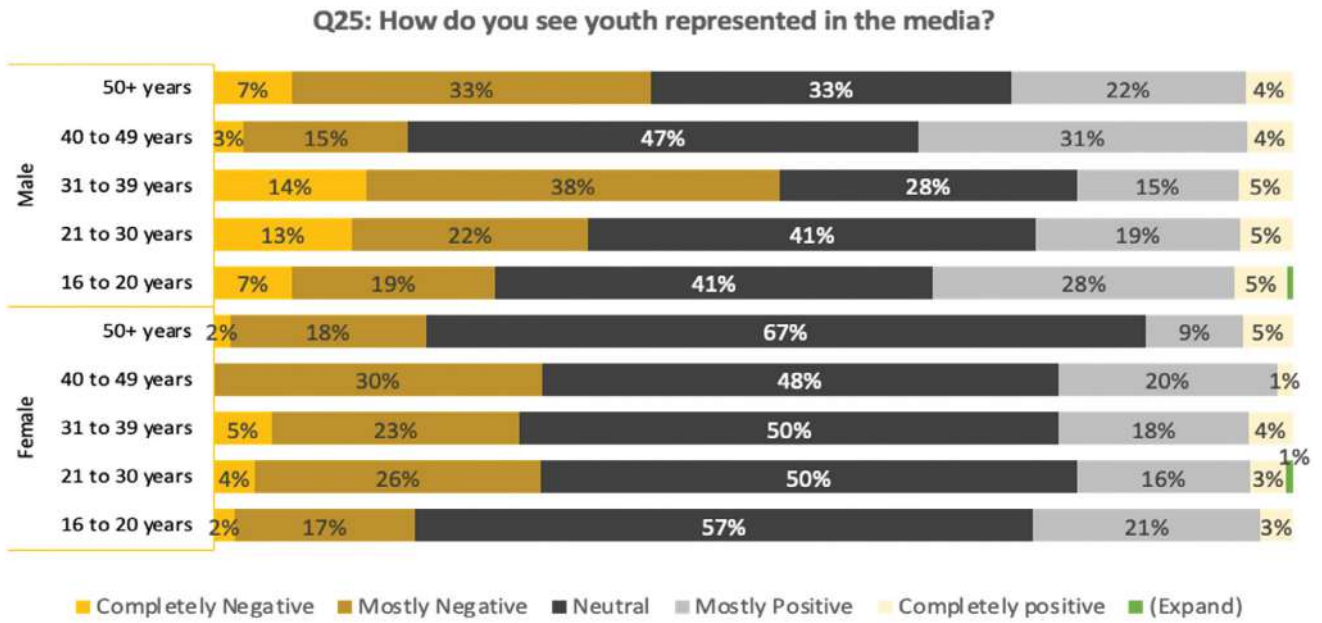
#### 4.4. Research Question 4

**RQ4: How do Syrian youth and women see their representation in the produced news content by the media?**

##### 4.4.1. Youth Representation

When asked about youth representation in media, the majority of respondents reported that Syrian youth and youth issues were represented in a neutral way (46%), with 23% believing that youth were represented in a predominantly negative way, 20% reporting that this was mostly positive, 6% believing this was completely negative, and only 4% believing that this was mostly positive. There were interesting findings related to gender differences with a larger proportion of females (54%) reporting that youth were represented ‘neutrally’, compared to just 38% of males. Interestingly, there was very little difference when aggregating responses by age as exemplified below, with the majority of respondents reporting that the youth were neutral, although the 31-to-39-year age group

**Figure 5.** How audiences view the representation of youth in media- by age-group (n=1,200).



reported a higher percentage of respondents who reported that youth representation (32%) was mostly negative (Figure 5).

However, significant differences remain when aggregating location responses, and there is no clear correlation between respondents' location and their view of youth representation. In NES, the majority of respondents in Hasaka (70%) and Deir Ez Zor (42%) viewed youth representation as mostly neutral, whereas the largest proportion of respondents in Ar-Raqqa (32%) believed that youth representation was 'mostly negative'. Discrepancies between respondents also exist within government-controlled areas. Whereas Latakya (39%) and Sweida (37%) both show youth representation as 'mostly negative', the highest proportion of respondents in Dar'a sees youth representation as 'mostly positive' (48%). In the Northwest of Syria these discrepancies still exist, whereas those in Idlib (74%) and rural Damascus

(78%) believe that youth representation was largely neutral (78%), the majority of those who resided in the city believed that youth representation was 'neutral', while those residents in rural Damascus (50%) largely view youth representation as mostly positive.

While the majority of interviewed respondents and media experts believe that youth were underrepresented, respondents across all locations believe that content delivered across traditional media platforms such as television and radio tend to frame youth in a 'stereotypical' manner, with one male informant reporting that on traditional media platforms the youth are portrayed as "superficial and [constantly] following illogical trends" (NB and in accordance with global misconceptions about the 'Gen Z generation'). Additionally, only one 40-year-old female respondent in Ar-Raqqa relayed a distinct news story she had consumed regarding youth, which was a negative one in

that it focused on their over-consumption of Tik Tok, and inappropriate content which children under the age of 18 were accessing without parental guidance.

Nevertheless, the IDIs reveal that the way that those perceive youth representation depended on the medium they were discussing, as interviewees from across all locations reveal that youth view themselves as better represented in social media and underrepresented in traditional media. Older respondents believed that traditional media had “no specific platform” which either appeals to the youth, or discusses youth issues, a point which was unanimously conveyed by media experts. Youth respondents who reported that their representation was positive, largely did so due to social media, such as in Ar-Raqqa<sup>2</sup> and Damascus, where youth respondents reported that they had good representation, as well as in Sweida where one 24-year-old male clarified that while in traditional media youth voices were marginalised, due to the existence of social media, “the [youth] are more present and have the tools to express their opinions”.

This exclusion of youth from traditional media is an important point as it also has a major impact on the type of news that they consume as according to one media expert, as it relates to ‘hard news’ - “They don’t care and are only interested in their own issues and don’t look at news which doesn’t affect them”. This is not necessarily the case, as a number of youth informants report engaging with political news on social media as they are more skeptical of

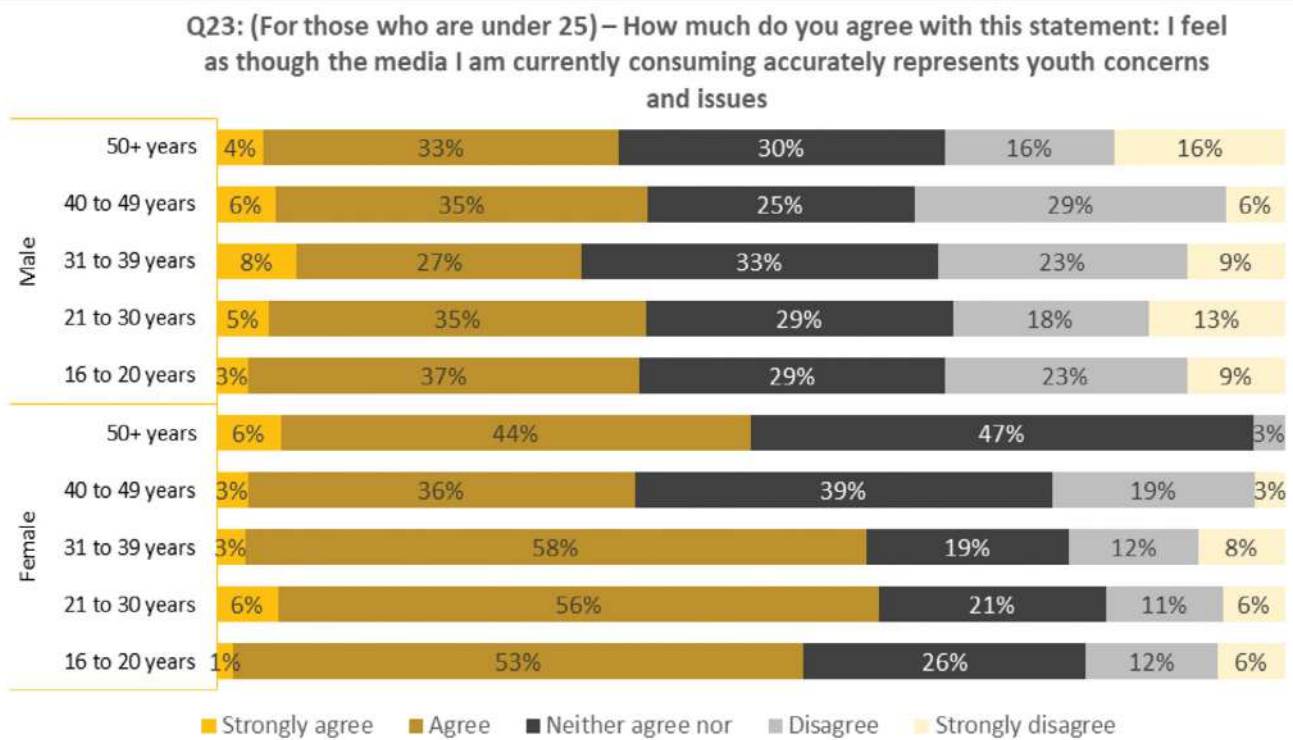
<sup>2</sup> Where youth respondents were the only ones to report positive youth representation, compared to older age groups.

news delivered on traditional media platforms, as youth respondents in interviews from Idlib, Deir Ez Zor, and Hasaka largely reported that they were represented negatively or excluded in traditional media, as they “don’t address the needs and concerns of young people”.

Moreover, as part of the triangulation of the data, we confirm that all IDIs, surveyed respondents, and media experts iterated that the issue of unemployment was a major topic concerning the youth which was largely ignored by the media, and this topic was cited by respondents in Hasaka, Ar-Raqqa, Deir Ez Zor, Aleppo, and Dar’a as an issue of primary concern. In Damascus and Sweida the topic of youth emigration to other countries was considered the most pressing problem facing Syrian youth today. Interestingly, youth respondents in Deir Ez Zor reported the need for “psychological support for young people”, a topic which was also reported as being more needed in media in Latakya and Idlib, where a youth respondent reported the need for mental health tools to be disseminated to overcome the “years of war”. Only one older respondent (30-year-old woman in Sweida) highlighted the mental health needs of young people as a primary concern, which the media were not currently reporting on. Additionally, a female youth in Idlib reported that the media lacked sufficient educational content and she desired for more topics related to “scientific seminars, scientific research and external scientific missions”. Interestingly, whilst media experts reported that the major news topic of concern was the fractured ‘identity’ of Syrian youth due to the divided nature of Syria, this was not reported as a major need by any respondent in any location.



**Figure 6.** Audience perceptions of accuracy of media representations of youth concerns and issues - by age-group (n=1,200).



#### 4.4.2. Women’s Representation

Much as was the case with representation of youth, the majority of surveyed respondents reported that women were represented in a ‘neutral’ (42%) way by the media. Approximately 31% reported that representation was ‘mostly positive’, followed by 15% who reported that their representation was ‘mostly negative’, 8% reported that their representation was ‘completely positive’ and 4% reported that it was ‘completely negative’ (Figure 7). There were further discrepancies when aggregating these responses by gender, with females largely reporting that their representation was neutral (51%), and males reporting that female representation was ‘mostly positive’. This was echoed in IDI discussions, where females

reported that the representation of women in the media was much more negative when compared to men.

Males and females from across all locations believed that women were portrayed in a positive light, as they had observed a growing presence of more women in the media landscape. Females in Aleppo reported that there were ample opportunities for women on the television, radio, and on social media which made them greatly represented, and female respondents in Damascus also claimed that there was much greater awareness raising of women’s issues. One female respondent in Damascus pointed to a recent media ‘campaign to stop violence’ which raised awareness of the high numbers of women who experience

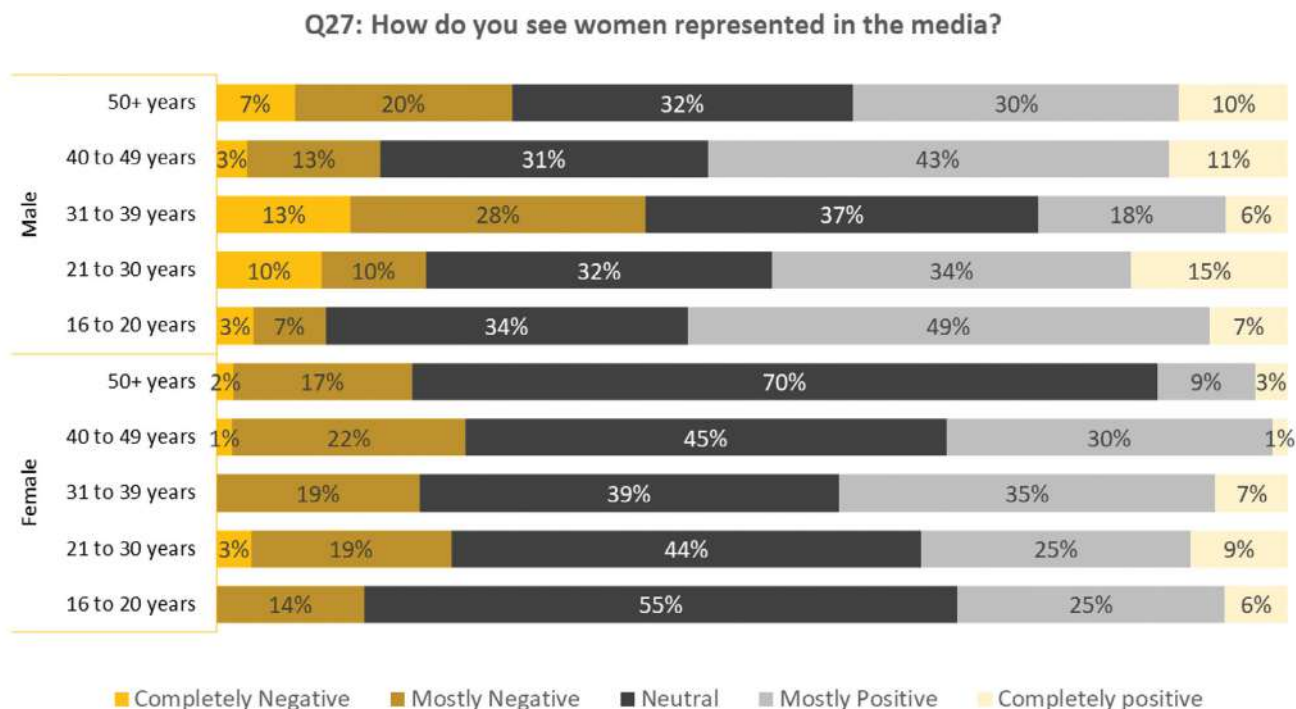
violence from men, and the widespread support this received as evidence of positive female representation.

Interestingly, interviews with males from across all age groups who viewed the media as portraying positive female representation in Aleppo, Damascus, and Idlib held some resentment for this as they believed that positive female representation came at the expense of men, as according to one male respondent in Aleppo: “opportunities for women in the media are more than for men”, this was argued as media had several ‘female -centred’ programming such as beauty, fashion, and cooking which was dedicated to women and exclusively increased their visibility, as well as in their eyes the media’s tendency to spotlight female achievement, as one male in Idlib reported that “International

Women’s day... the news I have seen more than a hundred times”. One woman in her thirties in Idlib also reported that while there was positive female representation in the media, this occurred “at the expense of other groups in society who also need to be highlighted”, and this respondent highlighted the elderly as a group of people who were severely underrepresented. One young male in Sweida believed that women were overrepresented on traditional media platforms such as television and radio, and that only on social media did he see a more equitable balance.

Additionally, males reported issues with the way in which females are presented across the media as they believed that women were often portrayed as behaving immorally and in a way which went against tradition and socially accepted norms, a

**Figure 7.** Audience perceptions of how women are represented in the media - by age-group (n=1,200).



complaint which was echoed across all age groups (e.g. a male in his late twenties reported that women are shown in a 'modern and semi-nude way'). This complaint also echoed in an interview with one media expert, who reported that news reports about women were often framed in a way which brought their moral character into question, rather than exploring the issues which are being debated. As one expert reported there is "shallow media coverage" which reported about women, and which "excludes them from the story". This was supported by another media expert who provided the example of a popular news story about Syrian women travelling to Europe and divorcing their husbands. However, while the media framed it in such a way which presented the women as 'loose' or foregoing their values, they never questioned why these women wanted a divorce or the conditions of their marriage, or even interviewed them to give their view.

Conversely, only one female respondent located in Sweida reported that women were portrayed in a stereotypical manner as being "shy and less than men", while most male and female respondents who reported that the media negatively portrayed women (Ar-Raqqa, Latakya, Deir Ez Zor, and Idlib) largely did so as they believed women were marginalised in the media, which aligns with the views of the majority of media expert respondents. This marginalisation of women was attributed to the war and subsequent unstable economic and political situation inside Syria which meant that there was "little interest in women's issues". Additionally, some male and female respondents attributed this negative representation to societal standards which oppress women. Media outlets have opportunities to promote

both youth and gender issues through high quality news.

#### **4.5. Research Question 5**

##### **RQ5: What level of trust do Syrian audiences have in a range of online and offline news and information sources, including independent media?**

Syrian audiences appear to have medium levels of trust in a wide range of online and offline news and information sources, including independent media. They appear to be quite trusting of the media in general and news that they access via social media. Over 74% of the sample reported that they trust news which they receive on social media from friends and family. This result is the same for males and females.

Syrians appear to have good capacity in identifying if an outlet is partisan or not, with 59% agreeing that they could tell when a media outlet adopts a certain political position. Only 13% disagreed that they could tell when a media outlet prefers a certain political position. Indeed, they think that most media outlets are politically motivated and have an agenda.

Respondents from some locations believe they are particularly adept at identifying the political leanings of the media, e.g. Rural Damascus respondents self-reported a 100% ability to identify the agenda of a media outlet, and 92% of Damascus respondents believed they could identify media partisanship (Tables 10 and 11). Aleppo has the lowest percentage of residents who believed that they can identify partisanship (28%), and Sweida and Hasaka respondents also had lower levels of agreement on this question (45%).

**Table 10:** Audience responses to the statement “I can identify media partisanship”- by location (n=1,200)

Locations	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree
Aleppo	17%	25%	46%	11%	2%
Ar-Raqqa	50%	7%	31%	11%	1%
Damascus	86%	3%	4%	6%	1%
Dar'a	66%	6%	20%	6%	2%
Deir Ez Zor	60%	4%	32%	4%	0%
Hasaka	39%	3%	51%	6%	1%
Idlib	35%	8%	27%	15%	15%
Latakya	20%	27%	23%	29%	1%
Rural Damascus	85%	0%	0%	15%	0%
Sweida	25%	41%	14%	20%	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>1%</b>

It is important for Syrians to consume news media which provides a more balanced view of events. People living in Damascus (99%) and rural Damascus (100%) had the highest level of agreement to their need for consuming media that provides balance. It is through a balanced coverage of events that trust is achieved, and the media professional interviewees believe that trust is an issue across all types of media.

### 5.5.1 levels of trust in media outlets

While TV is considerably less popular than social media for accessing news, within the diversity of TV channels there are preferences among audiences in which they trust and watch on a weekly basis. Of 22 TV providers listed, the three most preferred are Al Ekhbaria Al Soria, Addounia TV and Al Arabiya (Figure 8). Those least trusted and watched include Bloomberg, Deutsche Welle and Al Majlis.

Within this rating of news content by TV providers, there are some notable differences by gender, with females showing distinct preferences for Addounia TV and Al Ekhbaria Al Soria (when compared to males), and males showing preferences for Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya and BBC Arabic (Figure 9).

Regarding most trusted TV news providers by age-group, survey findings show that Al Ekhbaria Al Soria is most trusted across all age-groups, except for those aged 31-39 years, for whom Al Arabiya is most trusted. In terms of patterns of preference, results for 16–20-year-olds are similar to other age groups, albeit with a somewhat more marked preference for Al Ekhbaria Al Soria.

It is interesting to note that NES has higher overall levels of trust across 22 TV channels than other regions (Figure 10). Average levels

**Table 11:** Audience responses to the statement “It is important for me to consume news media which provides a more balanced view of events”- by location (n=1,200)

Locations	Agree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Strongly agree	Strongly disagree
Aleppo	56%	10%	28%	5%	1%
Ar-Raqqa	57%	3%	21%	19%	0%
Damascus	74%	0%	1%	25%	0%
Dar’a	76%	1%	13%	10%	0%
Deir Ez Zor	68%	10%	16%	6%	0%
Hasaka	41%	3%	45%	11%	0%
Idlib	53%	3%	24%	19%	0%
Latakya	63%	0%	1%	36%	0%
Rural Damascus	81%	0%	0%	19%	0%
Sweida	75%	1%	3%	21%	0%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>63%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>0%</b>

of trust are highest in Hasaka, followed by Deir Ez Zor and Ar-Raqqa with combined trust scores surpassing an average of 3.5/5.0.

Within NES, levels of trust are highest for Bloomberg, Deutsche Welle and Al Majlis, and all in Hasaka (Figure 11). Otherwise, levels of trust in each of the channels is generally consistent, with lowest levels in Ar-Raqqa overall. However, even the lowest scoring media are still rated at or above 3.0, with most outlets being rated as trending to or meeting the average of 4.0 (agree to trustworthy). This is an interesting finding in that there seems to be a floor of trust conferred to the media in general.

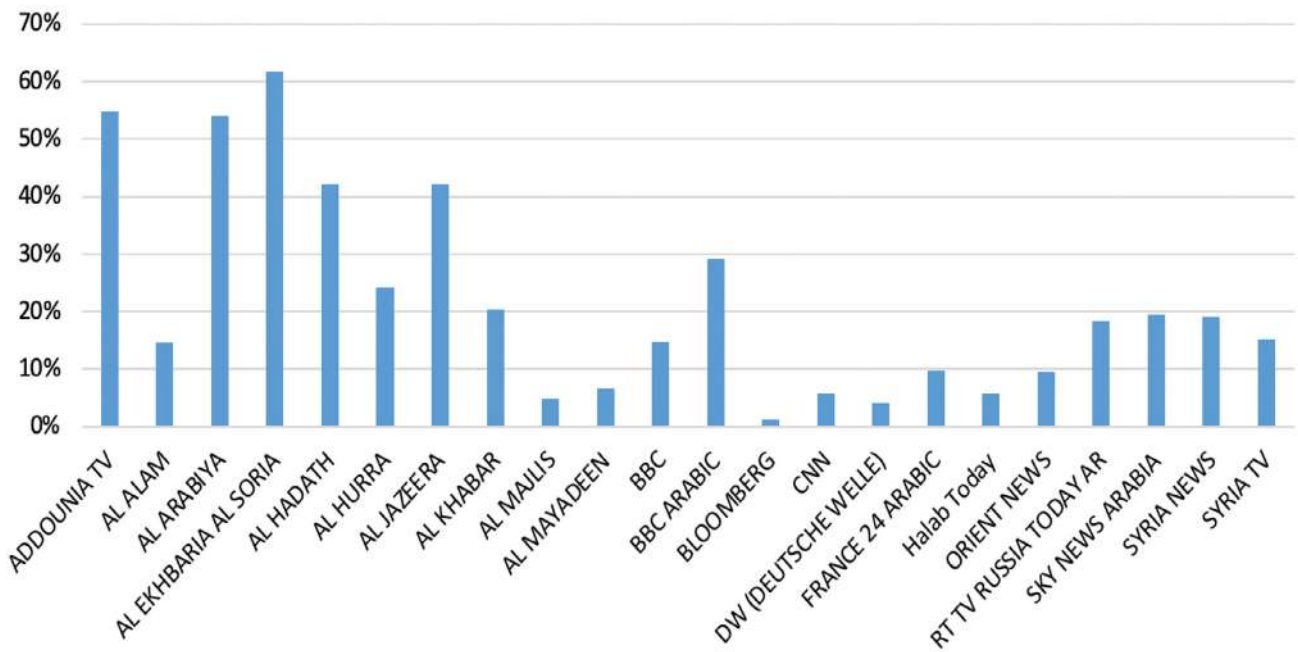
In terms of audience levels of trust in TV news content by age group, the average rating given for all 22 TV channels is very consistent for each age group. When the five most popular TV channels are assessed more

closely, it can be seen that the overall profile of preferences are similar across all five age groups, except for 16–20-year-olds, where Al Ekhbaria Al Soria is more trusted/preferred than with other age groups, and Al Jazeera is less trusted/preferred than across other age groups (Figure 12).

Regarding levels of trust in TV news content disaggregated by gender, female respondents display slightly higher levels of trust (3.9) than their male counterparts (3.7), overall. In terms of perceptions of what makes news coverage good quality, respondents identify honesty, reporting from the source, and being unbiased, as overall markers of quality and credibility. The picture that emerges is one where Syrians have medium levels of trust in most local, national, regional and international media. Ar-Raqqa has some of the lowest levels of trust across media outlets and that most likely reflects recent

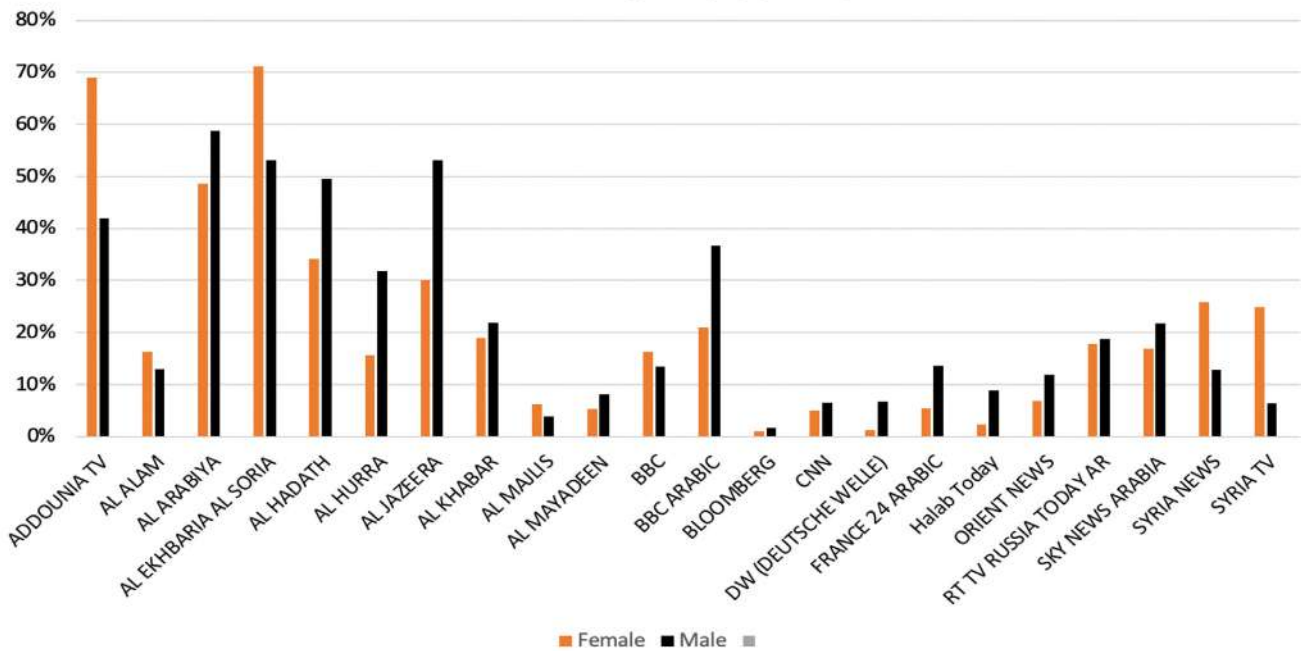
**Figure 8.** Chart showing TV channels ranked by those which audiences trust and watch news items consistently on a weekly basis (n=1,200).

**Most trusted and preferred local, pan regional and international TV channels for news consumption**



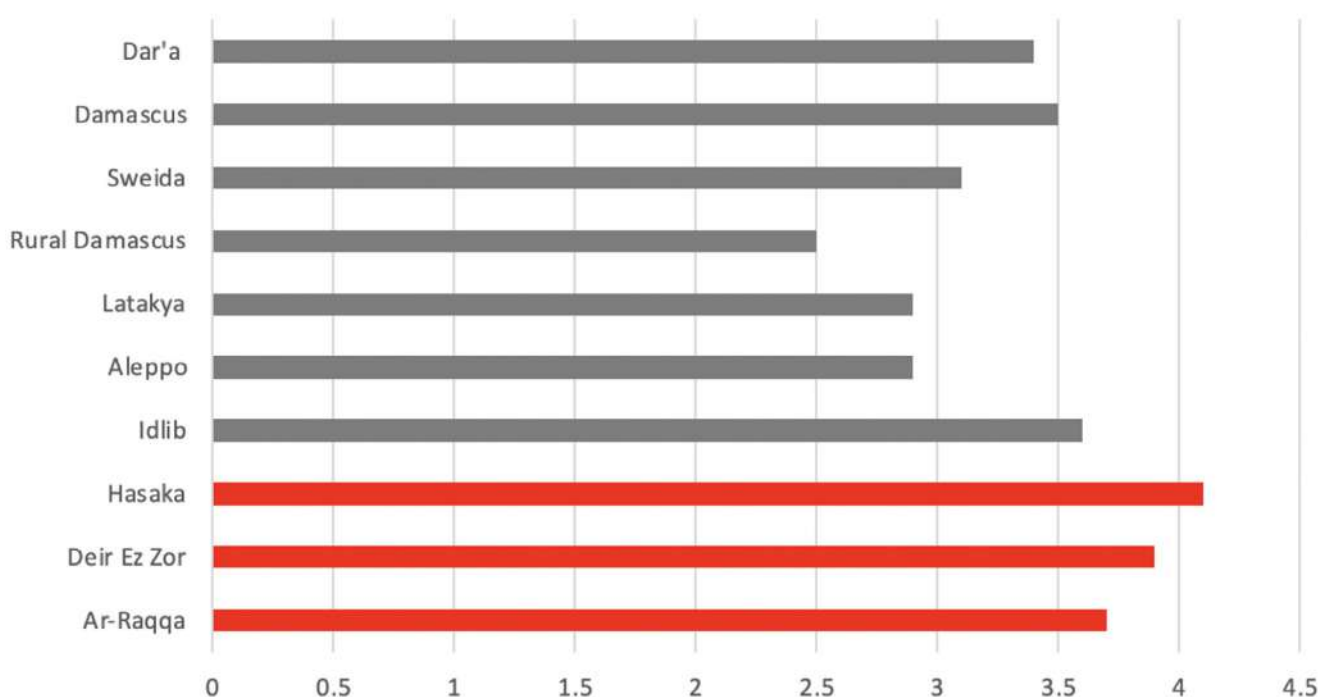
**Figure 9.** Chart showing TV channels ranked by those which audiences trust and watch news items consistently on a weekly basis - by gender (n=1).

**Most trusted and preferred local, pan regional and international TV channels for news consumption (by gender)**



**Figure 10.** Chart showing average levels of trust in news content of TV channels - by location. The red colour refers to the zoom in areas of NES.

### Overall/Average levels of trust in 22 regional and international TV channels for news consumption (by location)



history and the use of media as a partisan tool.

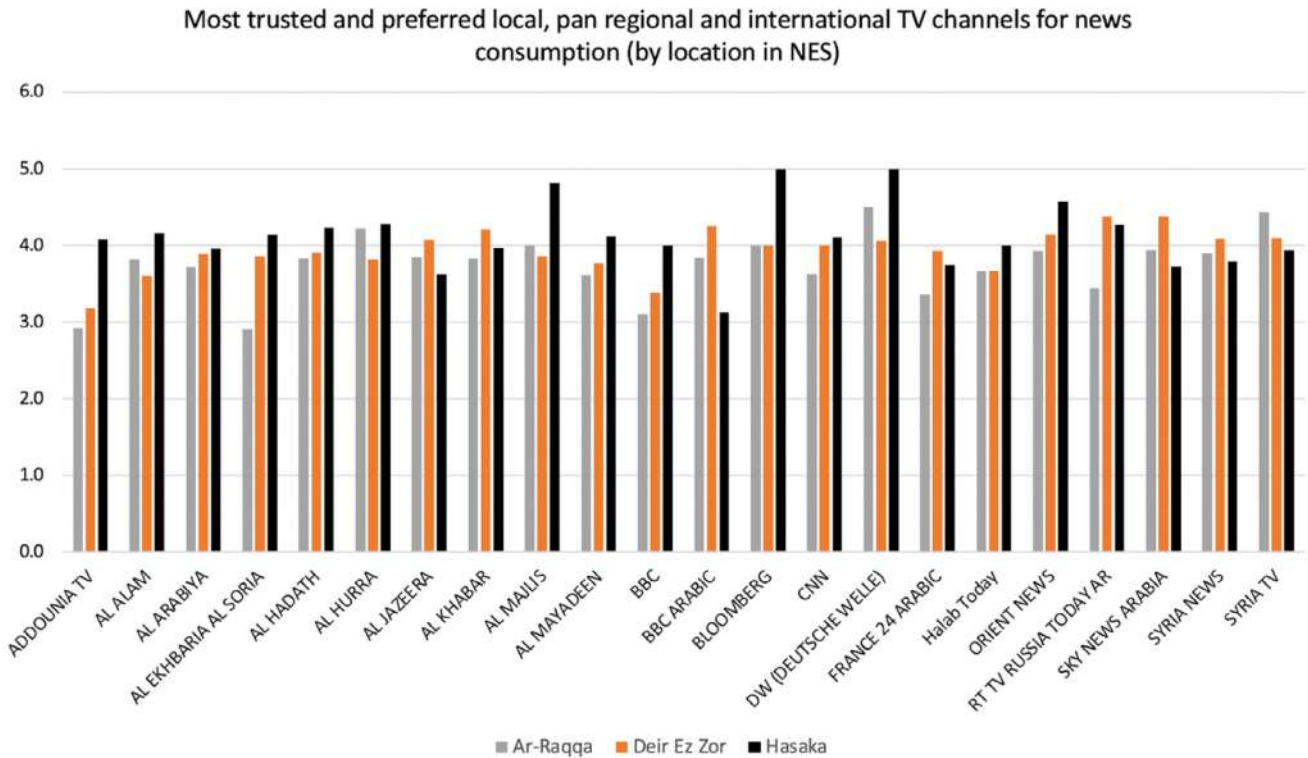
Regarding most trusted TV news providers by age-group, survey findings show that Al Ekhbaria Al Soria is most trusted across all age-groups, except for those aged 31-39, for whom Al Arabiya is most trusted. In terms of patterns of preference, results for 16–20-year-olds are similar to other age groups, albeit with a somewhat more marked preference for Al Ekhbaria Al Soria.

It is interesting to note that NES scores higher than other regions in terms of their combined and overall levels of trust across 22 TV channels

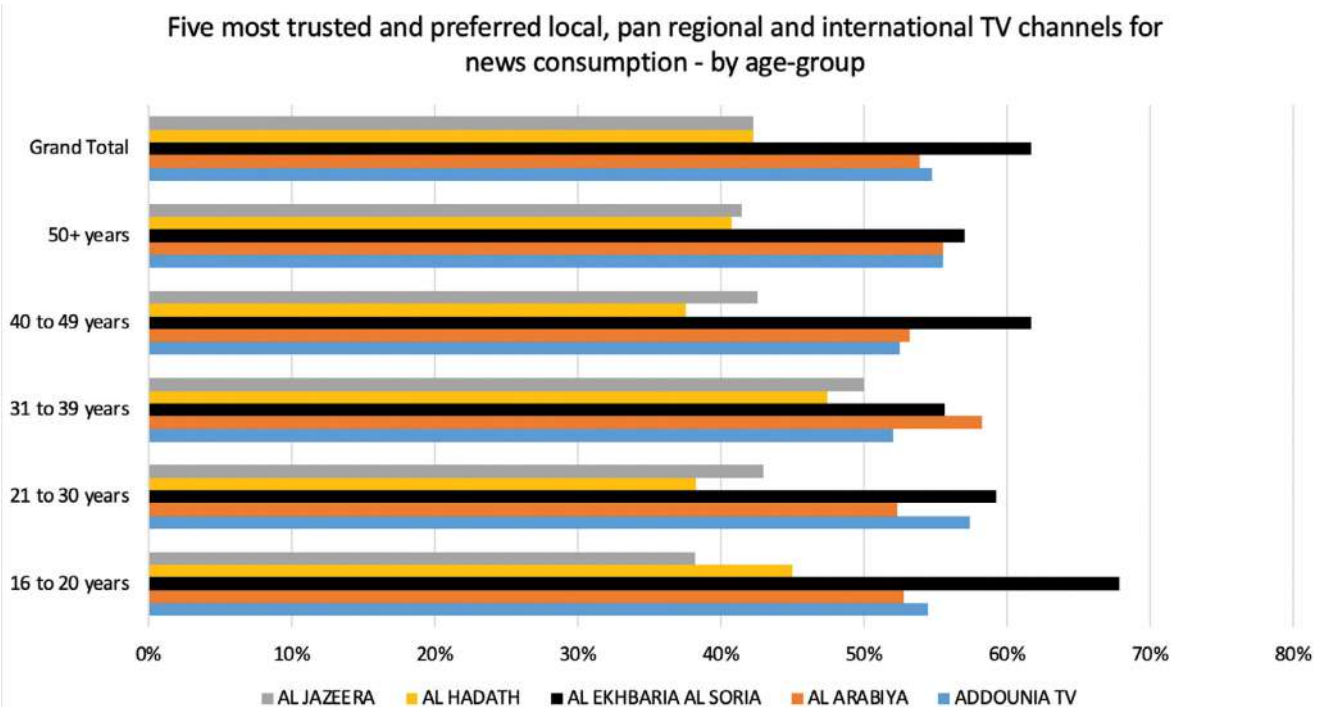
(Figure 14). Levels of trust are highest in Hasaka, followed by Deir Ez Zor and Ar-Raqqa.

In terms of audience levels of trust in TV news content by age group, the average rating given for all 22 TV channels is very consistent. However, when the five most popular TV channels are assessed more closely, it can be seen that the overall profile of preferences are similar across all five age groups, except for 16–20-year-olds, where Al Ekhbaria Al Soria is more trusted/preferred than with other age groups, and Al Jazeera is less trusted/preferred than across other age groups.

**Figure 11.** Chart showing average levels of trust in news content of TV channels - by location in NES.



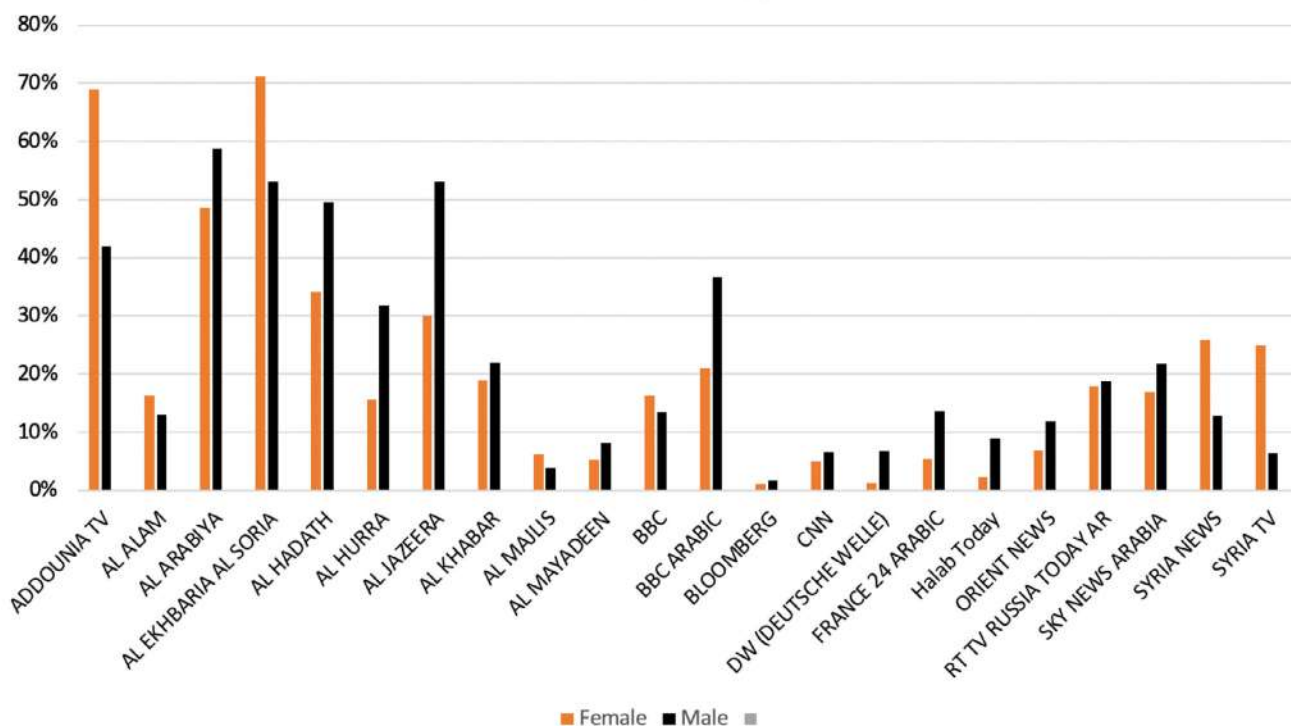
**Figure 12.** Chart showing the five most trusted and preferred TV channels for accessing news stories - by age-group.





**Figure 13.** Chart showing TV channels ranked by those which audiences trust and watch news items consistently on a weekly basis - by gender (n=1,200).

**Most trusted and preferred local, pan regional and international TV channels for news consumption (by gender)**



#### 4.6. Research Question 6

##### **RQ6: What role does independent and/or state media play in their daily lives, if any?**

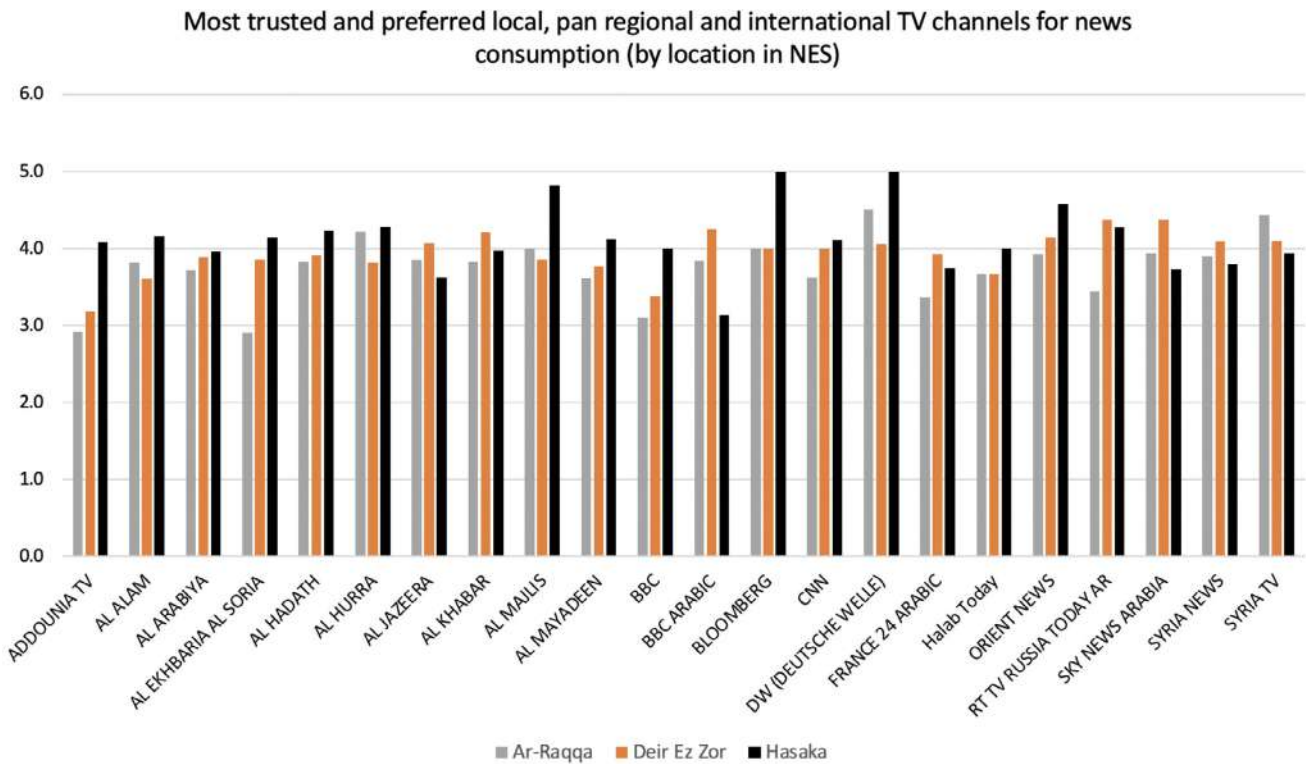
There is a complicated answer to this question and it reflects on the differing perceptions of and history of media in the country.

Those who reported that independent media plays a role in their daily lives, unanimously cited its “awareness raising” of important topics through presenting news stories without a particular bias which allows audiences to think more critically, and providing them with additional information that they may not necessarily have had access to, as one

respondent in Ar-Raqqa reported: “the more we follow credible news, the more we have a perception of what is waiting for us and the challenges we will face”. Respondents also reported that this news also tended to make them more accepting of “other cultures and differences between people” and could help to lessen the divisions between society.

Interestingly, whilst some respondents reported that gaining deeper knowledge through independent media helped to shape their political opinions, the majority (even those who believed that independent media played an active part in their daily lives) of respondents believed that independent media had no effect on their political opinions as their “political opinion is clear, specific, and

**Figure 14.** Chart showing levels of trust in news content across 22 TV channels - by locations in NES.



based on fundamentals that are difficult to penetrate by any media” as most respondents report having very rigid biases as it relates to certain political topics. For example one male in his thirties in Dar’a cited the normalisation of relations between Israel and UAE as a topic which he would never change his mind on, no matter how much knowledge he gained on the subject. For respondents like him, the ability to raise awareness of a topic was not akin to enforcing meaningful changes in people’s opinions, but rather to further educate them on topics with which they have limited knowledge.

For those who reported that independent media plays no role in their daily life, this answer was due to the belief that there “is no independent media, as most of them are biased or affiliated with a party”. The notion

that independent media organisations serve to advance certain political opinions and agendas was prevalent throughout key informant interviews, as respondents believed that they “should not only trust the information from media but also should inform themselves”. Interestingly some respondents rejected independent and state-owned news outlets as being biased, as opposed to local news which they believed was more trustworthy and relevant to their lives, one female in Ar-Raqqa reported watching “news clips saying that the situation inside Syria is good and improving” from an independent media source and did not believe this to be the case.

There is still some divergence of views about independent media. Some respondents did not wish for independent media in their lives as they

believed this type of news “has a negative impact on them” and increases their anxiety and feeling of hopelessness “as it conveys the bad reality of the region”. This may be due to news avoidance or feeling that news is negative.

When probed it also became clear that respondents did not have a uniform understanding of what independent media is or how it related to their daily lives with many referring to it as “a source of passing time” or ‘entertainment’, and others appreciate its value in delivering weather news and information about exchange rates. There was also some correlation between the way in which some youth respondents defined independent media and its correlation with social media, as one youth respondents in Sweida, Dar’a, and Aleppo saw it as a tool to “connect with friends better” and saw its value in providing “news information faster”. These answers may be a reflection that the content of independent news differs from government-controlled media and covers different topics.

#### **4.7. Research Question 7**

**RQ7: How do Syrian audiences see that ‘accountability driven content’ has contributed to help them manage their daily life struggles?**

Whilst most surveyed respondents (55%) reported that it was very important to consume media, which was investigative and in-depth, during interviews it became clear that while respondents see the value in this type of media there is not (yet) an appetite for slower, in-depth content across all of the country and IDP

areas. There are also major discrepancies found when aggregating the data by region, as in NES whilst the majority of respondents in Deir Ez Zor (69%) reported that it was important to consume “accountability driven content”, only 29% of those in Hasaka and 39% of those in Ar-Raqqa agreed. In Hasaka in particular the majority of these respondents were apathetic towards this media (54%). This was also the case in Northwest Syria where the bulk of respondents in Idlib (56%) and Aleppo (51%) reported that they were apathetic to this type of media. Interestingly surveyed respondents in government-controlled areas report much more positive feelings towards this type of media, as surveyed respondents in Damascus (66%), Rural Damascus (73%), Dar’a (82%), Latakya (62%), and Sweida (70%) predominantly agreed with the sentiment that ‘accountability driven content was important to them. As most surveyed respondents can clearly identify biased and politically motivated content, there is a need for more accurate and investigative reporting in these areas. There was very little difference when the responses were aggregated by gender, or by age categories.

Interviewed respondents who reported that this type of investigative news was important largely did so as they believed that this created greater awareness of issues and had the potential to create positive changes within society. This was because it provided greater context to problems that society faces, and as one female reported “would lead to more accountability” as people became more educated about topics and more aware of how to tackle these problems and who was responsible for them. Respondents also believed that this kind of journalism would also

guide audiences' attention to topics which are of importance. They believed that this type of journalism was less likely to distract audiences with 'superficial' topics which gain more coverage from state sponsored organisations, and instead educate viewers. The potential for this type of media to act as a preventative measure and as "a warning" for people to anticipate societal problems and address them earlier was also highly desirable for respondents. The 'solutions' dimension of this type of media was also widely praised by respondents, as they believed that through careful analysis of topics, and through discussing complex issues, this would lead to, in the words of one respondent in Deir Ez Zor, "rational and logical solutions" that can be realistically implemented and lead to societal change.

Interestingly, whilst surveyed respondents in Ar-Raqqa (39%) reported little interest in accountability driven media, during key interviews half the respondents were very positive towards this type of media. One male respondent believed that this type of media represented the true essence of journalism: "the primary role of the media is to shed light on controversial issues because simple issues can be presented and analysed by anyone". In light of social media and the rise of 'citizen journalism' where news stories can be disseminated with very little oversight, the notion that journalists must be deeply educated and informed in order to report was attractive to many respondents in a media environment of 'fake news'. Respondents in Ar-Raqqa who admired this type of content also reported that they believed that accountability driven media was more accurate than any other type. Significantly, the risks associated with this kind

of reporting also lend credibility to its accuracy in the eyes of respondents in Ar-Raqqa. One woman reported admiration for those who produce this kind of media, as they face the threat of arrest "just for reporting honest and accurate news".

Nevertheless, even in government-controlled areas where surveyed respondents reported appreciating this content, through all surveyed locations most interviewed respondents report that they simply **do not consume this kind of media, even if they admire it**. The reasons for this were uniform throughout the whole of Syria, even for younger age groups such as those 16-20 (57%) and 21 to 30 (55%) who reported that investigative media was important to consume, but were in agreement that this type of media was redundant, as in the words of one youth in Damascus: "most of the world doesn't want to follow lengthy content". Respondents from across all surveyed areas reported avoiding this content as they also deemed it to be 'boring' and 'dull'. Respondents in Aleppo also argued that due to the heavy economic and social obligations of their community, they did not believe that most people would have the time to follow lengthy content.

Across all age groups and genders, interviewees reported that the speed and accessibility of social media was its biggest draw. An interviewed media expert also felt that appealing to those with low media literacy was more related to the format than the content is an important factor, as even those who are interested in political and economic news largely avoid this type of media. Therefore, this expert told us that there might be a need to adapt current reporting

styles to the realities of the last decade (lower levels of literacy, IDPs etc.).

A key inhibitor to this content specifically for youth audiences and those with low educational levels, was that investigative or 'accountability driven' media was simply too inaccessible to have mass appeal. In the words of youth respondents in Hasaka, who reported that they trusted this media more, and believed that it could lead to accountability within their communities, they still felt that they would not consume this type of media as it was intended for 'the highly educated and professionals only'.

This was also true in Ar-Raqqa, where one female respondent reported that the news should focus on the essence of a story and not be too detailed, as it would be confusing and distracting to an average viewer. This was a belief echoed by respondents in Dar'a, Aleppo, and Sweida, where the benefits of this type of content were evident to them, but who also identified a problem in reaching the audience. It was also interesting that among youth respondents, there was also a belief that investigative journalism was restricted to political matters and not on any other topics. There might need to be some education of media consumers that accountability driven journalism can cover many social topics.

Whilst the majority of respondents were somewhat positive towards this type of media content, some respondents in Ar-Raqqa and Dar'a also reported some hesitancy towards it as they believed that it "encourages strife and ongoing problems" through spotlighting

societal and political issues which audiences may not be aware of, and which would lead to increased tensions within the country.

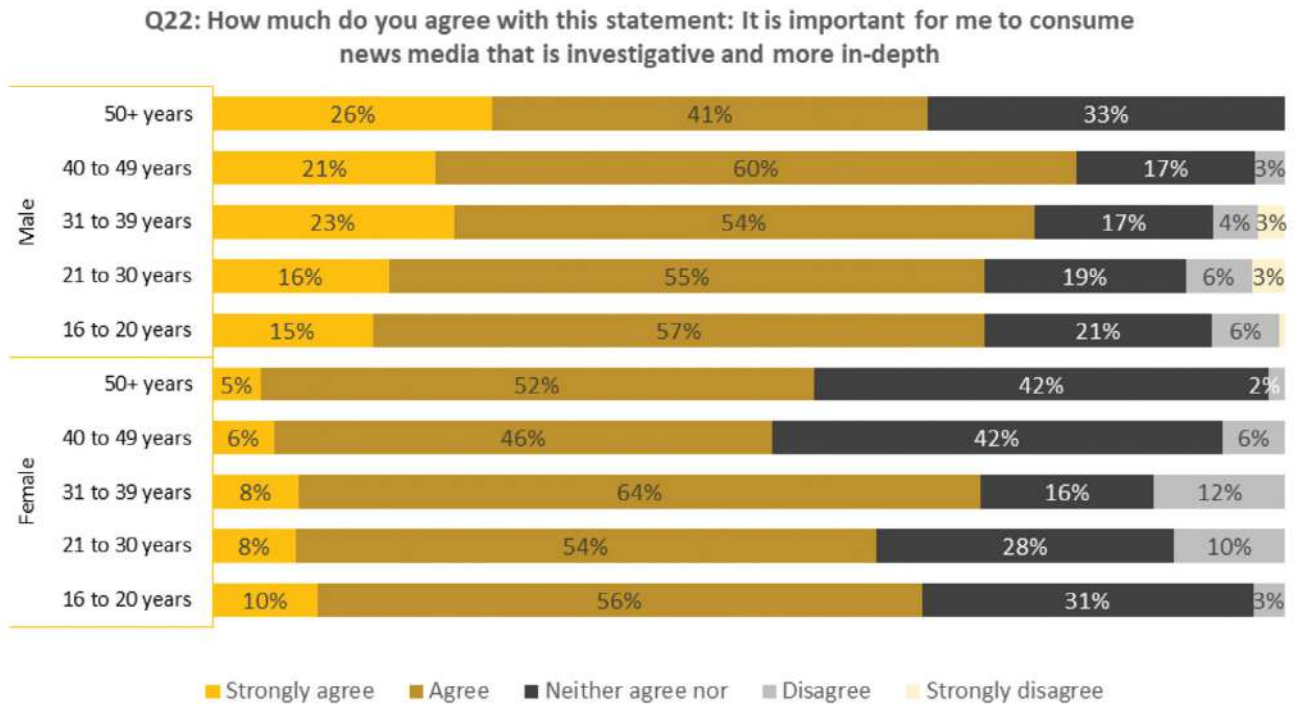
#### **4.8. Research question 8**

**RQ8: How and to what extent has independent media supported cohesion, dialogue and peacebuilding among Syrian audiences?**

Overall responses from respondents suggest that independent media is perceived as particularly useful for bridging divides between people from different political, social, and religious divides, as well as helping to bridge the gender gap. However, social media was overwhelmingly cited as the only appropriate platform which could bridge the generational divide. Other media were not frequently mentioned in the IDIs. Only one IDI mentioned: "it is possible to combine the efforts of traditional platforms such as television and radio, which are followed by the older generation, with social media platforms, which are followed by the younger generations." What did come out from the interviews was that it was the "hands" or the people who run different platforms who have a role in bridging divides. Many noted that media and social media in general are "neutral" channels but it is the people who control them that shape news.

The majority of respondents believe that independent media has the power to "bridge divisions between people by raising awareness and spreading a culture of peace" through accommodating those who possess multiple points of view, and providing a neutral space in which controversial issues could be discussed sensitively. This was unanimously agreed by

**Figure 15.** Chart showing levels of agreement in the statement “It is important for me to consume news media that is investigative and more in-depth” - by locations in NES.



media experts who cited the importance of news stories which are framed in a way to highlight the similarities between people, rather than the differences. One expert cited the earthquake as an example of this, as independent news organisations during the earthquake made efforts to show the “human problem not the political problem” through highlighting that whilst the country is divided, all people were affected in the same way and this is helpful towards peacebuilding. Interestingly, ‘hate speech’ which was also unanimously cited by media experts as a major contributor to conflict but was not cited by any respondent across all locations. In many parts of the world, social media are blamed for decreasing cohesion and increasing political divisions.<sup>3</sup> However in Syria,

media is largely regarded by both interviewed respondents and media experts as a positive tool to bridge the gender gap as it can be used to spotlight women’s issues and be used to combat against gender norms which oppress women in society. Interviewed respondents largely believed that it was better combatted through social media, as this already was a more neutral space and less contentious than traditional media outlets where there was more open communication between the sexes.

Interestingly, social media was cited as the primary platform which would bridge the generational divide, unlike the gender debate,

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2022/12/06/views-of-social-media-and-its-impacts-on-society-in-advanced-economies-2022/>

where most youth respondents reported that they did not believe that independent media was useful for bridging the generational gap. This was largely due to the low consumption of traditional media platforms by the youth, and the lack of programming which specifically caters to them. One older male respondent reported that in order for there to be a generational bridge, traditional media outlets would not only need to actively broadcast youth issues and increase their representation, but also communicate issues that older people face to enhance youth awareness and understanding of their generation. Nevertheless, some older respondents agreed with the idea that social media was vital in bridging the generational divide but did not believe that this necessarily requires the exclusion of traditional media outlets, but instead needs the “combined efforts of traditional platforms such as television and radio, which are followed by the older generation, with social media platforms, such as are followed by the younger generations” to successfully bridge this divide.

## **5. Recommendations**

This year’s data provide useful insights into understanding the information needs of Syrians. We now better understand their evolving media consumption habits, their information needs, their perceptions and attitudes towards the media they consume. There are several recommendations and lessons learned from the 2023 audience research.

1. Syrians have shifted to social media and messaging apps as their primary channel for accessing news information. They value the

privacy that messaging apps can give them. However, this means that they are less likely to go directly to news sites, and therefore may not know the actual source of news. Media outlets should work to ensure that their stories are branded, link back to their social media hashtags or accounts, and create shareable content for the most popularly used social media platforms and apps. The features of the diverse social media platforms and messaging apps are somewhat different, so media outlets need to capitalise on the unique features of each platform through tailoring content for each channel. In order to leverage these unique features, media outlets may need to develop or refine overall content strategies for each channel and use content calendars to deliver content at the best time for audiences.

2. The news and information needs of Syrian audiences have changed as the situation on the ground has evolved. Unlike in 2020, there is much less appetite for regional and international news topics as this is considered to be relatively unimportant to the average Syrian’s daily life. Instead, local news and local journalists have taken the lead, with audience keener to understand and learn about what is happening in their local settings. As a result of this, media outlets should consider the important role of local citizen journalists, and consider exclusive news segments targeting local news stories in order to increase appeal to audiences. It is also important that FPU and concerned media outlets consider ways to develop wider and deeper networks on the local level with people who can provide timely and credible news about what is happening in their area. It is also important to consider that most interviewed respondents relayed

that the visual aspect of media was the most important to them as it helps them “be there” when news is happening and so journalists and partners should also focus on letting pictures and images “tell the story”. It is also important to highlight that creating more video and audio content will also help those with low levels of literacy to follow the news.

3. Across all locations, Syrians want fast and breaking news in easy to digest news stories. Syrian audiences know that there is a lot of highly partisan information, particularly in traditional media. The majority of respondents reported that they rely on friends and family for fact-checking and that they regularly read the news feeds of their friends and their posts on Facebook. The indication remains (as was the case in the previous audience research study) that audiences fall into ‘bubbles’ or echo chambers where they consume the same information as their friends and thus share the same understanding of events and issues. It is important to note that tight social networks may mean that disinformation can not only spread throughout a network, but also may be believed more strongly by respondents. Media outlets should consider how to integrate fact checking into their stories, as there are opportunities for improving media literacy and recommendations for what audiences can do in fact checking to stop the spread of misinformation.

4. There is a recognition among the majority of respondents that ‘solutions journalism’ and ‘long-form journalism’ are valuable for providing perspective on issues and events. Nevertheless, IDIs suggest that in practice many people still want shorter news items.

Media outlets should consider ways to achieve the same end goal of long-form or solutions journalism through shorter but more frequent news pieces (the need for an audio-visual dimension cannot be understated). There may be opportunities to structure regularly occurring short stories which when combined together make a solutions-based story around one topic. Solutions journalism, long form journalism and accountability driven content need to go past political stories. They need to address social issues that are relevant to youth and women. There might need to be some education of media consumers that accountability driven journalism can cover many social topics.

5. In the NES area, some preferences for television and video platforms emerged suggesting that media outlets that want to serve these audiences should include visual components to stories. This could be due to lower levels of literacy or greater perceived dependency on visual information. For training opportunities, FPU could continue to support visual storytelling.

6. Syrian audiences appear to be adept at identifying those media outlets whose content is partisan, as they desire impartial, neutral news that is accurate. Syrian audiences also trust familiar sources and recognise that new sources (especially in light of the earthquake) are not always credible. These started to proliferate following the earthquake. Media outlets should continue to focus on high quality credible neutral content which builds on existing levels of trustworthiness. Media outlets can remind readers of their tenure in the community and their role in disseminating non-partisan news in their locally focused storytelling.



7. As most youth respondents reported that they felt marginalised by media and society, it is important that media outlets create content which is tailored to them, as they currently believe that the only content which is geared towards them exists exclusively on social media, and they do not want to be stereotyped in news coverage. Media outlets should consider ways to engage youth in stories and in ways that better reflect their interests - local news, economic news, and employment.

8. FPU and the concerned media outlets should also listen to women's voices in interviews, as they too want more and better representation in traditional media, and information which responds to their needs.

## **6. Conclusions**

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There are several important findings from this audience research study which can be taken into consideration by FPU and media outlet as part of their future media content creation.

Social media and messaging apps are the dominant channels for Syrians to seek and share

news and information. They are seen to provide quick access to information that can be shared and corroborated with friends and family. While constructive journalism is valued, it is often perceived as being long form, dull and boring and therefore has limited appeal, particularly for younger audiences. This suggests an opportunity for innovation in the way this content is produced with shorter form video and audio-based story telling based segments potentially having greater audience appeal. Additionally, there are evolving interests and definitions of independent media and their value. Syrians believe that they can tell biased or partisan media content. As evidenced in this study there is also consistent positive valuation of independent media and support for it is growing.

Finally, there are opportunities for media outlets to create engagement, dialogue and peace building through their social media channels. The earthquake brought Syrians together and they stopped, just for a bit, thinking of pro-Government and pro-opposition areas, other future events could also bring Syrians together and the media will play a major role in telling the national story.

## Annex A

Sample for in-depth interviews disaggregated per location, gender and education level:

Location	Age	Gender	Education level
Damascus	28	Female	educated
Damascus	17	Female	lower educated
Damascus	28	Male	educated
Damascus	23	Male	lower educated
Aleppo	24	Female	educated
Aleppo	24	Male	lower educated
Aleppo	37	Female	educated
Aleppo	25	Male	educated
Dar'a	23	Male	educated
Dar'a	24	Female	educated
Dar'a	27	Male	lower educated
Dar'a	26	Female	educated
Idlib	24	Male	educated
Idlib	28	Male	educated
Idlib	31	Female	educated
Idlib	23	Female	educated
Sweida	24	Male	educated
Sweida	34	Male	educated
Sweida	22	Female	lower educated
Sweida	30	Female	educated
Latakya	24	Female	educated
Latakya	20	Male	educated
Latakya	31	Female	educated
Latakya	33	Male	lower educated
Ar-Raqqa	27	Female	lower educated
Ar-Raqqa	34	Female	educated
Ar-Raqqa	34	Male	educated
Ar-Raqqa	32	Male	educated
Ar-Raqqa	32	Female	lower educated
Ar-Raqqa	22	Female	educated

<b>Ar-Raqqa</b>	38	Male	lower educated
<b>Deir Ez Zor</b>	38	Male	educated
<b>Deir Ez Zor</b>	33	Male	educated
<b>Deir Ez Zor</b>	24	Female	lower educated
<b>Deir Ez Zor</b>	40	Female	educated
<b>Deir Ez Zor</b>	45	Male	educated
<b>Hasaka</b>	26	Female	lower educated
<b>Hasaka</b>	40	Female	educated
<b>Hasaka</b>	23	Male	educated
<b>Hasaka</b>	24	Male	lower educated

## Annex B

Levels of audiences' need for news content, by media platform (N=1,200). Highlighting shows the most used information source.

Media channels	Local News of Syria	Regional News in Middle East	Internat'l News	Politics	Health	Education	Basic needs: food, water and shelter	Public services	Society	Crime	Culture and art News	Economic news (Syria)	Science & Tech News	Family	Environment	Youth	Gender Issues
<b>Messaging apps</b>	3%	1%	1%	1%	1%	2%	5%	5%	5%	2%	1%	1%	1%	14%	1%	3%	1%
<b>News websites</b>	4%	3%	4%	5%	3%	3%	2%	2%	3%	4%	2%	4%	3%	2%	2%	2%	2%
<b>None</b>	3%	5%	3%	7%	3%	6%	6%	7%	4%	12%	5%	4%	7%	7%	13%	5%	16%
<b>Print media</b>	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%
<b>Radio</b>	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%
<b>Social Media</b>	72%	71%	73%	67%	75%	71%	75%	76%	77%	70%	78%	75%	73%	65%	69%	79%	70%
<b>TV</b>	15%	17%	15%	17%	11%	7%	8%	8%	8%	10%	8%	13%	7%	9%	11%	6%	8%
<b>Video platforms</b>	1%	2%	3%	2%	6%	10%	2%	1%	2%	2%	5%	2%	7%	2%	2%	4%	2%

Levels of audiences' need for news content, by location / gender / age group (N=1,200). Highlight shows the answers that met or exceeded the 3.5 threshold average for information needs.

Locations	Local News of Syria	Regional News in Middle East	Intern'l News	Politics	Health	Education	Basic needs: food, water and shelter	Public services	Society	Crime	Culture and art News	Economic news (Syria)	Science & Tech News	Family	Environment	Youth	Gender Issues
Aleppo	2.5	1.5	2.0	1.2	2.4	2.7	2.4	2.3	2.5	1.0	2.7	2.6	2.4	2.2	1.6	2.2	1.4
Ar-Raqqa	4.2	3.5	3.4	3.1	3.4	3.2	3.2	3.3	3.4	2.5	3.0	3.6	2.4	3.4	2.7	3.3	2.4
Damascus	4.3	3.8	3.6	3.2	3.7	3.8	4.3	3.8	3.6	3.8	3.6	4.2	3.8	3.5	3.2	3.4	2.8
Dar'a	3.0	2.3	2.2	2.5	2.3	2.6	2.4	2.2	2.5	2.4	2.0	2.7	1.9	2.5	1.7	2.6	3.0
Deir Ez Zor	3.8	3.2	2.7	3.1	2.7	3.0	2.8	3.1	3.0	2.0	2.8	3.2	2.6	3.3	2.0	3.4	1.8
Hasaka	4.0	3.4	3.5	3.3	3.6	3.7	3.9	3.6	3.7	2.9	3.4	3.6	3.4	3.3	3.2	3.5	3.1
Idlib	1.9	1.1	3.1	1.3	4.1	4.4	4.3	1.0	1.7	0.9	2.9	2.7	4.0	2.0	1.1	1.4	0.7
Latakya	3.9	3.4	3.1	2.5	3.6	3.7	3.4	3.3	3.1	1.4	3.3	3.8	3.2	3.1	2.8	3.6	2.8
Rural Damascus	4.3	3.4	3.2	3.2	4.1	4.3	4.4	4.4	4.2	4.2	4.1	4.1	3.5	4.0	3.8	3.9	3.9
Sweida	3.4	2.8	2.7	2.0	3.0	3.5	3.1	3.3	3.5	2.6	3.3	2.8	3.2	3.3	2.3	3.5	3.1
Location Average	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>2.4</b>
Female	3.4	2.9	3.0	2.4	3.6	3.7	3.5	3.2	3.3	2.4	3.5	3.2	3.3	3.4	2.9	3.3	3.0
Male	3.8	3.0	2.8	2.9	2.8	3.0	3.1	2.9	2.9	2.2	2.7	3.4	2.7	2.8	2.0	3.0	2.0
Gender Average	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>2.4</b>
16 to 20 years	3.6	2.9	2.9	2.5	3.2	3.6	3.3	3.2	3.2	2.5	3.4	3.2	3.3	3.1	2.6	3.5	2.9
21 to 30 years	3.6	2.7	2.8	2.3	3.1	3.4	3.3	3.0	3.0	2.2	3.0	3.3	3.1	2.9	2.3	3.2	2.5
31 to 39 years	3.6	3.0	2.7	2.8	3.1	3.2	2.9	2.6	2.9	1.9	2.8	3.2	2.3	3.4	2.1	3.0	1.9
40 to 49 years	3.6	3.2	3.2	2.9	3.4	3.3	3.7	3.2	3.3	2.4	2.7	3.6	2.7	3.1	2.5	2.8	2.1
50+ years	3.7	3.4	3.2	3.3	3.2	2.8	3.2	3.3	3.3	2.6	2.7	3.8	2.7	3.0	2.6	2.7	2.2
Age average	<b>3.6</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.4</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>2.4</b>

## Annex C: Tools

### Recruitment Questionnaires:

This interview will be used to identify the 40 people for the clinics and diaries and the 20 people for the interviews.

#### S1- Gender

Male	1
Female	2

#### S2- May I know your age?

Record exact age.

/\_\_/\_\_/ Age

#### S3- Can you please tell me your marital status?

Single	1
Married	2
Divorced / Widowed	3

#### S4- What Languages do you speak?

Arabic	1
Kurdish	2
Turkish	3
Other(specify)	4

### S5- Where do you live?

Location	#	Urban (1) or Rural (2)
Damascus	1	
Rural Damascus	2	
Aleppo	3	
Idlib	4	
Hasaka	5	
Qamishli	6	
Ar-Raqqa	7	
Sweida	8	
Other (specify)	9	

### S6- What is your status?

Living in Syria	1
Refugee/IDP within Syria	2
Refugee outside of Syria/ Diaspora	3

## Annex D: Survey

### DEMOGRAPHICS SECTION

#### S1- Gender الجنس

Male ذكر	1
Female أنثى	2
Other أخرى	3

#### S2- May I know your age? هل يمكنني معرفة عمرك?

Record exact age. سجل العمر بالتفصيل.

/\_\_\_/\_\_\_/ Age

#### RECODE ANSWER IN S2 S2 أعد ترميز الإجابة في

Under 15 years [Terminate]15 تحت ال 15	1
16 to 20 years	2
21 to 30 years	3
31 to 39 years	4
40 to 49 years	5
50+ years	6

#### S3- What is your nationality? ماهي جنسيتك

Syrian سوري	1
Other [Terminate] أخرى يرجى التوقف	2

#### S4- What Languages do you speak?

ماهي اللغة التي تتحدث بها

Arabic عربي	1
Kurdish كوردي	2
Turkish تركي	3
Other(specify) أخرى	4



### S5- Where do you live? أين تعيش

		Urban (1) Rural (2)
Damascus دمشق	1	
Rural Damascus ريف دمشق	2	
Aleppo حلب	3	
Idlib أدلب	4	
Dar'a درعا	5	
Sweida سويدا	6	
TBC	7	
Other أخرى	8	

### S6- What is your residential status?

ما هو الوضع السكني الخاص بك؟

Living in Syria يعيش بسوريا	1
IDP within Syria نازح داخلي بسوريا	2
Returnee عائد	3

**Q.D1 - Can you please tell me what your total monthly personal income is?**

**Can you also tell me your total monthly household income? By total monthly household income I mean the collective income from all sources per month**

هل يمكنك أن تخبرني ما هو إجمالي دخلك الشخصي الشهري؟  
هل يمكنك أيضًا إخباري بإجمالي دخل أسرتك الشهري؟  
أعني بإجمالي دخل الأسرة الشهري الدخل الجماعي من جميع المصادر شهريًا

		PI	HH
Syria سوريا	Below 65,000SP أقل من	1	1
	65,000 – 85,000 SP	2	2
	85,001 – 100,000 SP	3	3
	100,001 – 150,000 SP	4	4
	150,000 SP or more	5	5
	Don't have personal income لا يوجد لديه دخل شهري	6	
	Refused/ don't know رفض / لا أعرف	7	7

**Q.D2 - Please tell me your highest level of education? من فضلك قل لي أعلى مستوى تعليمي لديك؟**

Higher than secondary education أعلى من التعليم الثانوي	1
Secondary education تعليم ثانوي	2
Lower education levels. مستوى تعليم منخفض.	3

**Q.D3 - Please tell me your occupation? من فضلك قل لي مهنتك؟**

## Standard Opening

**Q1- Below media platforms, please tell me how often in a typical day which of these media platforms do you obtain news information from (prior to the earthquake).**

بالأسفل منصات تواصل أجماعي ، من فضلك أخبرني كم مرة في يوم عادي أي من هذه المنصات الإعلامية تحصل على معلومات إخبارية منها (قبل الزلزال).

Source مصدر	Q1a- Frequency التردد				Q1b- Time spent per day الوقت الذي تقضيه كل يوم	Q1c- How much is needed كم هو مطلوب
	Once per day مرة في اليوم	Twice per day مرتين في اليوم	3-5 times per day من ثلاث مرات الى خمس مرات باليوم	More than 6 times per day أكثر من 6 مرات في اليوم		1-6
TV تلفاز						
Radio راديو						
Print (newspapers, magazines, etc.) جرائد، مجلات						
Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) (منصات التواصل الاجتماعي (فيس بوك، تويتر						
Video Platforms (YouTube, Tik Tok, etc.) (..منصات الفيديو (يوتيوب، تيك توك						
Messaging Apps (WhatsApp, Telegram, Viber, SMS) برامج الدردشة (واتس أب، تليغرام، فايبر، رسائل عادية)						
Online news websites مواقع إخبارية على الإنترنت						
Other websites مواقع أخرى						
None of the above [TERMINATE survey] لاشيء مما سبق أوقف الاستبيان						

## Q2 – Which social media networks do you use the most for sharing news?

ما هي شبكات التواصل الاجتماعي التي تستخدمها أكثر من غيرها لمشاركة الأخبار؟

Source				
	Once per day مرة في اليوم	Twice per day مرتين في اليوم	Three to five times a days من ثلاث مرات الى خمس مرات باليوم	More than five times a day أكثر من خمس مرات باليوم
Facebook فيس بوك				
Twitter توتير				
Instagram أنستا غرام				
Telegram تليغرام				
WhatsApp واتس أب				
Tik Tok تيك توك				

## Q4- From the media platforms listed below, please tell me how often in a typical day which of these media platforms do you obtain news information about the earthquake from.

من منصات الوسائط المدرجة أدناه ، من فضلك أخبرني كم مرة في يوم عادي أي من هذه المنصات الإعلامية تحصل منها على معلومات إخبارية حول الزلزال.

Source	Q1a- Frequency				Q1b- Time spent per day الوقت الذي تقضيه كل يوم	Q1c- How much is needed كم هو مطلوب
	Once per day مرة في اليوم	Twice per day مرتين في اليوم	3-5 times per day من ثلاث مرات الى خمس مرات في اليوم	More than 6 times per day أكثر من 6 مرات في اليوم		1-6
TV تلفاز						
Radio راديو						
Print (newspapers, magazines, etc.) جرائد (مجلات، جرائد أخبارية)						
Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) وسائل تواصل اجتماعي (فيس بوك، توتير،...)						
Video Platforms (YouTube, Tik Tok, etc.) (...منصات الفيديو (يوتيوب، تيك توك						
Messaging Apps (WhatsApp, Telegram, Viber, SMS) (برامج الدردشة ( واتس أب، تليغرام، فايبر، رسائل عادية						
Online news websites مواقع إخبارية عبر الإنترنت						
Other websites مواقع أخرى						
None of the above [TERMINATE survey] لاشيء مما سبق						

**Q5 - On a five point scale, what are the levels of trust which exist around local, pan-regional and international radio stations coverage of the earthquake? where 5 means "trust it very much" and 1 means "don't trust it at all", please tell us how much you trust each of the following types of news outlets?**

على مقياس من خمس نقاط ، ما هي مستويات الثقة الموجودة حول تغطية المحطات الإذاعية المحلية والإقليمية والدولية للزلازل؟ حيث تعني ٥ "تثق بها كثيراً" وتعني ١ "لا تثق بها على الإطلاق" ، يرجى إخبارنا بمدى ثقتك في كل نوع من أنواع وسائل الإعلام التالية؟

الأسم NAME		الثقة 1-5 TRUST
راديو شام Sham FM	1	
راديو المدينة Al Madina FM	2	
صوت الشباب Sawt Al Shabab	3	
راديو السورية Al Souriya FM	4	
دمشق Dimashq	5	
راديو ملودي Melody FM	6	
راديو فرح Farah FM	7	
مونت كارلو الدولية Monte Carlo Al Doualiya	8	
النور Al Nour	9	
راديو الشباب Al Chabab FM	10	
هلا Halala	11	
راديو فن Fann FM	12	
BBC	13	
راديو روزانه Rozana FM	14	
مرح Marah	15	
سوريا الغد Syria Alghad	16	
راديو نينار Ninar FM	17	
صوت المدينة Sawt Al Madina	18	
صوت لبنان Sawt Lebnan	19	
MBC	20	
المدينة Al Mayadin	21	
صوت الغد Sawt El Ghad	22	
راديو الكرم El Karma FM	23	
راديو أمواج Amwaj FM	24	
المنار Al Manar	25	
راديو ارتا ARTA FM	26	
راديو سينار Sinar FM	27	
راديو سوا Radio Sawa	28	
راديو فان VonFM	29	
راديو مكس Mix FM?	161	
أخرى (specify) Other		
None x		

## Q6 – How do you gain news information from social media? - (prompted response)

كيف تحصل على المعلومات الإخبارية من وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؟ - (أجابة سريعة)

I check posts (videos/articles/audio) shared by friends on Facebook أتحقق من المشاركات (مقاطع الفيديو / المقالات / الصوت) التي يشاركها الأصدقاء على الفيس بوك	
I check news information written by friends in a publicly posted message on Facebook أتحقق من المعلومات الإخبارية التي كتبها الأصدقاء في رسالة منشورة بشكل عام على الفيس بوك	
I check news information written by friends in a publicly posted message on WhatsApp أتحقق من المعلومات الإخبارية التي كتبها الأصدقاء في رسالة منشورة بشكل عام على الواتس أب	
I check the timeline of my friends to see the news which is shared there أتحقق من الجدول الزمني لأصدقائي لمعرفة الأخبار التي يتم مشاركتها هناك	
I check news information written by friends in a publicly posted message on Telegram أتحقق من المعلومات الإخبارية التي كتبها الأصدقاء في رسالة منشورة بشكل عام على التليغرام	
I purposely visit pages of individuals (friends/famous people etc.) on Facebook to check for news information أقوم بزيارة صفحات الأفراد (الأصدقاء / المشاهير وما إلى ذلك) عمدًا على الفيس بوك للتحقق من المعلومات الإخبارية	
I read private news messages sent to me by friends on Facebook قرأت رسائل إخبارية خاصة أرسلها لي الأصدقاء على الفيس بوك	
I read private news messages sent to me by friends on WhatsApp قرأت رسائل إخبارية خاصة أرسلها لي الأصدقاء على الواتس أب	
I read private news messages sent to me by friends on Telegram قرأت رسائل إخبارية خاصة أرسلها لي الأصدقاء على تلغرام	
I check posts of news outlets that I follow when they appear in my news feed on Facebook أتحقق من منشورات المنصات الإخبارية التي أتابعها عندما تظهر في موجز الأخبار على الفيس بوك	
I check posts of news outlets that I follow / like by purposely visiting their pages on Facebook أتحقق من منشورات المنصات الإخبارية التي أتابعها / تعجبني من خلال زيارة صفحاتها على الفيس بوك عن قصد	
I check posts of news outlets that I do not follow when they appear in my news feed on Facebook أتحقق من منشورات المنصات الإخبارية التي لا أتابعها عندما تظهر في موجز الأخبار على الفيس بوك	
I check posts published in groups that I am a member of when they appear in my news feed on Facebook أتحقق من المشاركات المنشورة في المجموعات التي أنا عضو فيها عندما تظهر في موجز الأخبار الخاص بي على الفيس بوك	
I check posts published in groups that I am a member of by purposely visiting the page of the group on Facebook أتحقق من المشاركات المنشورة في المجموعات التي أنا عضو فيها عن طريق زيارة صفحة المجموعة على الفيس بوك عمدًا	
I check news information if they pop up as advertisements on my pages on Facebook أتحقق من معلومات الأخبار إذا ظهرت كإعلانات على صفحتي على الفيس بوك	
I receive (videos/articles/audio) on WhatsApp أستقبل (مقاطع فيديو / مقالات / صوت) على الواتس أب	
I receive (videos/articles/audio) on Telegram أستقبل (مقاطع فيديو / مقالات / صوت) على تلغرام	
Other (Please specify) أخرى	

## Q7 – Does social media cover all your news and information needs?

هل تغطي وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي جميع احتياجاتك من الأخبار والمعلومات؟

None لا	A little of my needs القليل من احتياجاتي	Partially Save translation جزئياً	Most of my needs أغلب احتياجاتي	Completely بالكامل
1	2	3	4	5

## Q8 – To what extent do you believe that the news information that you receive via social media is accurate and free from bias?

إلى أي مدى تعتقد أن المعلومات الإخبارية التي تتلقاها عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي دقيقة وخالية من التحيز؟

Completely biased and inaccurate متحيز تماماً وغير دقيق	Mostly biased and inaccurate متحيز في الغالب وغير دقيق	Partially جزئياً	Mostly unbiased and accurate معظمهم غير متحيز ودقيق	Completely unbiased and accurate غير متحيز ودقيق تماماً
1	2	3	4	5

## Q9 - To what extent do you believe that the news information that you receive via social media is more trustworthy when it is shared to you by family and friends?

إلى أي مدى تعتقد أن المعلومات الإخبارية التي تتلقاها عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي تكون أكثر موثوقية عندما يتم مشاركتها معك من قبل العائلة والأصدقاء؟

Completely distrust بالكل لا اثق	Mostly distrust في الأغلب لا اثق	Partially trust أثق جزئياً	Mostly trust في الغالب أثق	Completely trust أثق بالكامل
1	2	3	4	5

## Q10 - From the different news (radio, TV, social media, print) types, can you please rate how much you need the following news types in your daily life?

Using a 5-point scale, where 5 means “need it very much” and 1 means “don’t need it at all”, please tell us how much do you need or don’t need each of the following types of news in your daily life.

من أنواع الأخبار المختلفة (الراديو ، التلفزيون ، وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي ، المطبوعات) ، هل يمكنك من فضلك تقييم مدى احتياجك لأنواع الأخبار التالية في حياتك اليومية؟

باستخدام مقياس مكون من 5 نقاط ، حيث 5 تعني «أحتاجها كثيراً» وتعني 1 «لست بحاجة إليها على الإطلاق» ، يرجى إخبارنا كم تحتاج أو لا تحتاج إلى كل نوع من أنواع الأخبار التالية في حياتك اليومية.

Do not consume لا تستهلك	Don't need at all لا أحتاجها على الإطلاق				Need it very much أحتاجها كثيراً
1	2	3	4	5	88

## Q11. Content preferences تفضيلات المحتوى

	Need it 1-6 تحتاج	TV تلفاز	Radio راديو	Print media مجلات	Video platforms منصات الفيديو	Social Media وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي	News websites مواقع أنترنت أخبارية	Messaging apps وسائل الدردشة	None ولا أي منهم
Local News of the country الأخبار المحلية للبلاد									
Regional News in the Middle East أخبار إقليمية في الشرق الأوسط									
International News Worldwide translation أخبار دولية في جميع أنحاء العالم									
Politics سياسة									
Health صحة									
Education تعليم									
Basic needs: food, water and shelter الاحتياجات الأساسية: طعام، مياه، مأوى									
Public services خدمات عامة									
Society مجتمع									
Crime جرائم									
Culture and art News اخبار الثقافة والفن									
Economic news in the country الأخبار الاقتصادية في البلاد									
Science & Technology News أخبار العلوم والتكنولوجيا									
Family الأسرة									
Environment البيئة									
Youth شباب									
Gender Issues مشاكل الجندرة									



## Q12-How would you define Independent media? Select all that apply

كيف تعرف وسائل الإعلام المستقلة؟ اختر كل ما ينطبق

Free from influence by government خالية من تأثير الحكومة	1
Free from influence by political actors, parties or interest groups خالية من تأثير الفاعلين السياسيين أو الأحزاب أو مجموعات المصالح	2
Free from commercial interests خالية من المصالح التجارية	3
Free from influence by the media's owner or major media corporations خالية من التأثير من قبل صاحب وسائل الإعلام أو المؤسسات الإعلامية الكبرى	4
Financially independent مستقلة مادياً	5
Free to report critically حر في تقرير نقدي	6
Free from bias خالية من التحيز	7
Free to discuss any topic regardless of its content حرية مناقشة أي موضوع بغض النظر عن محتواه	8
Free from advertising خالية من الاعلانات	9
Free from paywalls خالية من الخلفيات	10
Any other definition (Expand) (أي تعريف آخر (توسيع)	11

**Q13- In a typical week, can you please tell me what are the top 5 local, pan-regional and international TV channels that you that you watch to consume news. 1-5**

For the five that you have selected, please rate your level of trust for each outlet. **Using a 5-point scale, where 5 means "trust it very much" and 1 means "don't trust it at all", please tell us how much you trust each of the following types of news in your daily life.**

في أسبوع عادي ، هل يمكن أن تخبرني من فضلك ما هي أفضل 5 قنوات تلفزيونية محلية وإقليمية وعالمية تشاهدها لتستهلك الأخبار. 1-5 بالنسبة إلى الخمسة الذين حددتهم ، يرجى تقييم مستوى ثقتك لكل منفذ بيع. باستخدام مقياس من 5 نقاط ، حيث 5 تعني «ثقة به كثيراً» ويعني 1 «لا تثق به على الإطلاق» ، يرجى إخبارنا بمدى ثقتك في كل نوع من أنواع الأخبار التالية في حياتك اليومية.

الاسم NAME	الثقة TRUST 1-5	
الدنيا ADDOUNIA TV	1	
الأمل AL ALAM	2	
العربية AL ARABIYA	3	
الأخباريو السورية AL EKHBARIA AL SORIA	4	
الحدث AL HADATH	5	
الحرّة AL HURRA	6	
الجزيرة AL JAZEERA	7	
الخبر AL KHABAR	8	
المجلس AL MAJLIS	9	
المدينة AL MAYADEEN	10	
بي بي سي BBC	11	
بي بي سي العربية BBC ARABIC	12	
بلومبرغ BLOOMBERG	13	
سي ان ان CNN	14	
DW (DEUTSCHE WELLE)	15	
فرنسا العربية FRANCE 24 ARABIC	16	
حلب اليوم Halab Today	17	
أخبار اورينت ORIENT NEWS	18	
أر تي الروسية العربية RT TV RUSSIA TODAY AR	19	
سكاي نيوز عربي SKY NEWS ARABIA	20	
أخبار سوريا SYRIA NEWS	21	
تلفزيون سوريا SYRIA TV	22	
Other (specify)	98	
None		

**Q14- Can you please tell me what are the top 5 local, pan-regional and international radio stations that you that you listen to consume news in a typical week.** For the five that you have selected, please rate your level of trust for each outlet. **Using a 5-point scale, where 5 means “trust it very much” and 1 means “don’t trust it at all”, please tell us how much you trust each of the following types of radio stations in your daily life.**

هل يمكنك أن تخبرني ما هي أفضل 5 محطات إذاعية محلية وإقليمية ودولية تستمع إليها لتستهلك الأخبار في أسبوع عادي. بالنسبة إلى الخمسة الذين حددتهم ، يرجى تقييم مستوى ثقتك لكل منفذ بيع. باستخدام مقياس مكون من 5 نقاط ، حيث 5 تعني «ثق به كثيراً» ويعني 1 «لا تثق به على الإطلاق» ، يرجى إخبارنا بمدى ثقتك في كل نوع من أنواع محطات الراديو التالية في حياتك اليومية.

NAME		TRUST 1-5
Sham FM	1	
Al Madina FM	2	
Sawt Al Shabab	3	
Al Souriya FM	4	
Dimashq	5	
Melody FM	6	
Farah FM	7	
Monte Carlo Al Doualiya	8	
Al Nour	9	
Al Chabab FM	10	
Hala	11	
Fann FM	12	
BBC	13	
Rozana FM	14	
Marah	15	
Syria Alghad	16	
Ninar FM	17	
Sawt Al Madina	18	
Sawt Lebnan	19	
MBC	20	
Al Mayadin	21	
Sawt El Ghad	22	
El Karma FM	23	
Amwaj FM	24	
Al Manar	25	
ARTA FM	26	
Sinar FM	27	
Radio Sawa	28	
VonFM	29	
Mix FM?	161	
Other (specify)		
None		

**Q15- Can you please tell me what are the top 5 local, pan-regional and international Online media (websites, social media platforms etc.) that you visit to consume news in a typical week. (can we/should we mix media channels with social media?)**

**For the five that you have selected, please rate your level of trust for each outlet. Using a 5-point scale, where 5 means "trust it very much" and 1 means "don't trust it at all", please tell us how much you trust each of the following websites in your daily life.**

هل يمكنك أن تخبرني ما هي أفضل 5 وسائل محلية وإقليمية ودولية على الإنترنت (مواقع الويب ومنصات التواصل الاجتماعي وما إلى ذلك) تزورها لتستهلك الأخبار في أسبوع عادي. (هل يمكننا / يجب علينا مزج القنوات الإعلامية مع وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي؟) بالنسبة إلى الخمسة الذين حددتهم ، يرجى تقييم مستوى ثقتك لكل منفذ بيع. باستخدام مقياس من 5 نقاط ، حيث 5 تعني «ثق به كثيراً» ويعني 1 «لا تثق به على الإطلاق» ، يرجى إخبارنا بمدى ثقتك في كل موقع من مواقع الويب التالية في حياتك اليومية.

NAME الأسم		الثقة 1-5 TRUST
Sham FM راديو شام	1	
Al Madina FM راديو المدينة	2	
Sawt Al Shabab صوت الشباب	3	
Al Souriya FM راديو السورية	4	
Dimashq دمشق	5	
Melody FM راديو ملودي	6	
Farah FM راديو فرح	7	
Monte Carlo Al Doualiya مونت كارلو الدولية	8	
Al Nour النور	9	
Al Chabab FM راديو الشباب	10	
Hala هلا	11	
Fann FM راديو فن	12	
BBC	13	
Rozana FM راديو روزانه	14	
Marah مرح	15	
Syria Alghad سوريا الغد	16	
Ninar FM راديو نينار	17	
Sawt Al Madina صوت المدينة	18	
Sawt Lebanon صوت لبنان	19	
MBC	20	
Al Mayadin الميادين	21	
Sawt El Ghad صوت الغد	22	
El Karma FM راديو الكرم	23	
Amwaj FM راديو أمواج	24	
Al Manar المنار	25	
ARTA FM راديو ارتا	26	
Sinar FM راديو سينار	27	
Radio Sawa راديو سوا	28	
VonFM راديو فان	29	
Mix FM? راديو مكس	161	
Other (specify) أخرى		
Nonex		

**Q16- Using a 5-point scale, where 5 means "Extremely important" and 1 means "Not important at all", we would like to know how important are each of the following statements to you with regard to media reporting on Syria. You may choose "1" or "5" or any number in between.**

باستخدام مقياس من 5 نقاط ، حيث 5 تعني «مهم للغاية» و 1 تعني «غير مهم على الإطلاق» ، نود أن نعرف مدى أهمية كل من البيانات التالية بالنسبة لك فيما يتعلق بالتقارير الإعلامية عن سوريا. يمكنك اختيار «1» أو «5» أو أي رقم بينهما.

1	2	3	4	5	88
Not important at all غير مهمة على الإطلاق				Extremely important مهمة جداً	DK/NA

	Statements المواضيع	
1	It is a popular and familiar news outlet إنه منفذ إخباري مشهور ومألوف	
2	It has no political or religious affiliation ليس لها انتماء سياسي أو ديني	
3	Has accurate and credible news لديه أخبار دقيقة وذات مصداقية	
4	It is neutral in reporting and shows no bias towards any group إنه محايد في الإبلاغ ولا يظهر أي تحيز تجاه أي مجموعة	
5	Promotes the common good/public interest يعزز الصالح العام / المصلحة العامة	
6	It has a variety of formats (news, analysis, opinion, etc.) (.لها أشكال متنوعة (أخبار ، تحليلات ، رأي ، إلخ	
7	Has a balance between pro-Government and pro-opposition news لديه توازن بين أخبار النظام والمعارضة	
8	It presents information I can't get from other news sources يقدم معلومات لا يمكنني الحصول عليها من مصادر الأخبار الأخرى	
9	It dares to be critical in reporting and during interviews إنها تجرؤ على أن تكون حاسمة في التقارير وأثناء المقابلات	
10	Reflects diversity of demography, culture, and beliefs يعكس تنوع الديموغرافيا والثقافة والمعتقدات	
11	Breaking news are reported as it is occurring يتم الإبلاغ عن الأخبار العاجلة فور حدوثها	
12	Provides a forum for (community) discussion (يوفر منتدى للمناقشة (المجتمع	
13	Has trusted contributors لديه مساهمون موثوق بهم	
14	Shares the reasons for choices made in reporting and is transparent about how the work is done يشارك أسباب الاختيارات التي يتم إجراؤها في إعداد التقارير ويتسم بالشفافية حول كيفية إنجاز العمل	
15	It provides me with information I need to form my own opinion about important topics إنه يزودني بالمعلومات التي أحتاجها لتكوين رأيي الخاص حول الموضوعات المهمة	
16	It provides me with information I need to make important decisions إنه يزودني بالمعلومات التي أحتاجها لاتخاذ قرارات مهمة	

**Q17: What would you like to see from the news media you are currently consuming? Choose from one of the following (maybe used for the under-25s)**

ما الذي تود أن تراه من وسائل الإعلام الإخبارية التي تستهلكها حاليًا؟ اختر من بين الخيارات التالية (ربما تُستخدم لمن هم دون 25 عامًا)

	Statements	
1	News media helps me understand different topics تساعدني وسائل الإعلام الإخبارية على فهم الموضوعات المختلفة	
2	The topics covered would be more relevant to my daily life ستكون الموضوعات التي يتم تناولها أكثر صلة بحياتي اليومية	
3	The news media scrutinizes leadership and powerful figures, acts as a watchdog تدقق وسائل الإعلام الإخبارية في القيادة والشخصيات القوية ، وتعمل كهيئة رقابية	
4	There are more 'good news' and Human Interest stories هناك المزيد من "الأخبار الجيدة" وقصص الاهتمام البشري	
5	That the news media presents to me new and diverse points of view أن تقدم لي وسائل الإعلام وجهات نظر جديدة ومتنوعة	
6	That there is more immediacy of coverage (or breaking news) أن هناك تغطية فورية أكثر (أو الأخبار العاجلة)	
7	Other (expand) أخرى	

Please state how strongly you agree with the following statement:

**Interviewer: please read each of the categories below and then circle the answer.**

يرجى توضيح مدى موافقتك بشدة على العبارة التالية: الباحث: يرجى قراءة كل فئة من الفئات أدناه ثم وضع دائرة حول الإجابة.

**Q18: How much do you agree with this statement: I can tell when a news media outlet prefers or supports a certain political position.**

ما مدى موافقتك على هذا العبارة: يمكنني معرفة متى تفضل وسيلة إخبارية أو تدعم موقفًا سياسيًا معينًا.

- |                      |                |
|----------------------|----------------|
| 5- Strongly agree    | موافق بشدة     |
| 4- agree             | موافق          |
| 3- neither agree nor | محايد          |
| 2- disagree          | غير موافق      |
| 1- Strongly disagree | غير موافق بشدة |

**Q19: How much do you agree with this statement: It is important for me to consume news media which provides a more balanced view of events.**

ما مدى موافقتك على هذا العبارة: من المهم بالنسبة لي أن أستهلك وسائل الإعلام التي توفر رؤية أكثر توازنًا للأحداث.

- |                      |                |
|----------------------|----------------|
| 5- Strongly agree    | موافق بشدة     |
| 4- agree             | موافق          |
| 3- neither agree nor | محايد          |
| 2- disagree          | غير موافق      |
| 1- Strongly disagree | غير موافق بشدة |

**Q20: How much do you agree with this statement: It is important for me to consume news media that offers a solutions driven approach.**

ما مدى موافقتك على هذا العبارة: من المهم بالنسبة لي أن أتابع وسائل الإعلام الإخبارية التي تقدم نهجًا مدفوعًا بالحلول.

- |                      |                |
|----------------------|----------------|
| 5- Strongly agree    | موافق بشدة     |
| 4- agree             | موافق          |
| 3- neither agree nor | محايد          |
| 2- disagree          | غير موافق      |
| 1- Strongly disagree | غير موافق بشدة |

**Q21: What would you consider as 'solutions driven' media? Can you give an example of news you have recently consumed which you believe falls under this category? (open ended question)**

ما الذي يمكن اعتباره وسائل «مدفوعة بالحلول»؟ هل يمكنك إعطاء مثال على الأخبار التي تناولتها مؤخرًا والتي تعتقد أنها تندرج تحت هذه الفئة؟ (سؤال مفتوح)

**Q22: How much do you agree with this statement: It is important for me to consume news media that is investigative and more in-depth?**

ما مدى موافقتك على هذا العبارة: من المهم بالنسبة لي أن أتابع وسائل الإعلام الإخبارية التي هي استقصائية وأكثر تعمقًا؟

- |                      |                |
|----------------------|----------------|
| 5- Strongly agree    | موافق بشدة     |
| 4- agree             | موافق          |
| 3- neither agree nor | محايد          |
| 2- disagree          | غير موافق      |
| 1- Strongly disagree | غير موافق بشدة |



**Q23: (For those who are under 25) – How much do you agree with this statement: I feel as though the media I am currently consuming accurately represents youth concerns and issues?**

ما مدى موافقتك على هذا العبارة: أشعر كما لو أن الإعلام الذي أتابعه حالياً يمثل بدقة مخاوف الشباب وقضاياهم؟

- 5- Strongly agree موافق بشدة  
4- agree موافق  
3- neither agree nor محايد  
2- disagree غير موافق  
1- Strongly disagree غير موافق بشدة

**Q24: What are the greatest challenges facing Syrian youth today? (open ended question)**

ما هي أكبر التحديات التي تواجه الشباب السوري اليوم؟ (سؤال مفتوح)

**Q25: How do you see youth represented in the media?**

كيف ترى تمثيل الشباب في الإعلام؟

Completely Negative سلبى تماماً	Mostly Negative على الأغلب سلبى	Neutral حيادى	Mostly Positive على الأغلب إيجابى	Completely positive إيجابى تماماً	(Expand) تفصيل أخرى
1	2	3	4	5	

**Q26: How would you like to see youth represented in the media? (open ended question)**

كيف تريد أن ترى الشباب ممثلين في وسائل الإعلام؟ (سؤال مفتوح)

**Q27: How do you see women represented in the media?**

كيف ترى تمثيل المرأة في وسائل الإعلام؟

Completely Negative سلبى تماماً	Mostly Negative على الأغللب سلبى	Neutral حيادى	Mostly Positive على الأغللب أيجابى	Completely positive أيجابى تماماً	(Expand) تفصيل أخرى
1	2	3	4	5	

**Q28: Do you consume more breaking news coverage on the earthquake from traditional media outlets, or do you mainly rely on social media? (open ended questions)**

هل تتابع المزيد من التغطية الإخبارية العاجلة للزلزال من وسائل الإعلام التقليدية ، أم أنك تعتمد بشكل أساسي على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعى؟ (أسئلة مفتوحة)