

EUR(O)VISION

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REPORT CHILDREN'S NEWS: HOW CAN IT SURVIVE THE DIGITAL ERA?

In collaboration with


POLIS
Journalism and Society

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By Kristin Granbo, NRK

Kristin Granbo is a journalist working for the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation, NRK. Since 2008 she has been a multimedia reporter for their news website NRK.no, and a television reporter for their main news programme, Dagsrevyen.

Kristin covered the UN climate change conferences in Copenhagen in 2009 and in Cancun in Mexico the following year. She has also been a royal correspondent covering three royal weddings, in Stockholm and in London.

For the past two years she has been a VJ and producer for NRK's children's news programme Supernytt. After being given new tasks to report on different platforms and experiencing changes in the formats for news reporting she became curious to see what these changes did to the content of children's news. This autumn she has spent four weeks at the London School of Economics, as an EBU fellow, taking a closer look at how new platforms, formats and increasing competition online are changing the ways children's news journalists around Europe work.

About the Online journalism fellowship for Members at London School of Economics

The Journalism Fellowship was created in partnership with the London School of Economic's think tank, Polis. EBU and Polis offer journalists under the age of 35 working for EBU Members the chance to win a prestigious online journalism research fellowship based in London.

The month-long fellowship is open to journalists who wish to carry out a short piece of original research into an aspect of contemporary news media practice. The subject should be related to online, mobile or social media with a particular focus on how media change is impacting on editorial, ethical or political aspects of journalism.

PREFACE

Mike Mullane

Head of Media Online, EBU Media Department

Kristin Granbo is our third annual EBU Fellow at the London School of Economics. We launched the programme to provide young journalists with a unique opportunity to spend a month at a world-class university to carry out original research into an aspect of contemporary news media practice.

It is important to stress that the report reflects Kristin's own opinions, and not the official view of either the EBU or the LSE. That is because the aim of the programme is not to produce a comprehensive study, but rather to stimulate debate and innovation. Opinions are crucial at a time when scientific research cannot keep pace with media change, when the internet, mobile and social media are daily transforming the way that we create, distribute and consume content.

We would like to thank Professor Beckett and Polis, the journalism think tank of the LSE, for their enthusiasm, belief and contribution to the success of this project. We would also like to thank Kristin for her valuable insights into children's news - an area of journalism that is too often neglected by academics and media strategists alike. More work is needed in this area for the simple reason that news is a cornerstone of public service media and children are our future. We are sure that you will find Kristin's report interesting and useful. We hope that you will find it provocative.

Charlie Beckett

Professor, LSE POLIS

I am delighted to have teamed up with EBU again for this fellowship report. It is a great scheme that allows a working journalist to spend a month at the LSE researching one aspect of their work. It is not supposed to be a comprehensive or academic report. Instead the idea is that it drills down into one challenge and asks a selection of journalists how they have tried to solve it.

I helped shape the research and edit the report but this is very much Kristin's own work. We hope it will help and inspire journalists working on news for children. But we also think that it is a great example of how new platforms and changing audience behavior is forcing journalists - especially those in public service media companies - to think again about every aspect of their craft. So while children's news is special, it is the same as every kind of journalism: it is changing and becoming much more networked.

Polis is the LSE's journalism think-tank.

Please visit our blog <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis> or follow us on Twitter @PolisLSE for updates on our events including our annual journalism conference.

Children use social media in incredibly sophisticated ways. They have genuine multimedia conversations with each other. This has huge benefits for us. I think it will revolutionize the way we work.¹



Children's news can no longer be defined as just a 15 minute bulletin aired on TV at 5pm.

Why? Because our audience is busy at that time of the day. In fact they are busy at all times, all day: sending "snaps" to each other, liking pictures on Instagram, sharing links on Facebook and watching hilarious YouTube videos.

How are children's news programmes supposed to divert their attention as they swim in the ocean of content providers out there? And how can journalists convince them that they should be their preferred choice when they can also find so much content elsewhere?

This raises a fundamental question: Is there still a need for specialized children's news in the digital era, and if so, what should we produce?

CHILDREN'S INTEREST IN THE NEWS

First of all, let's establish the fact that children want news.

They are interested, easily engaged by what's going on in the world and, importantly, they have a right to be informed, which is laid down in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Art.17).²

Children's motivations for following the news are, perhaps not so surprisingly, very similar to those of adults.

According to the Digital News Report 2015, asking people across all age groups, the most important reasons for accessing the news is "to know what's going on in the world" and "to understand how news may affect me".³

Asking children in Norway about their motivations, researchers got similar replies:

If, for example, a prisoner has escaped near where I live, then I'll hear it on the news, and I can choose to stay inside my house instead of going outside.⁴

Another reason for following the news is to be able to take part in conversations with friends, which sparked an interest with this 11 year old:

One time my friends were talking about the news from Nepal, the earthquake, and I just stood there listening, because I hadn't paid any attention to the news. After that day I watched Supernytt every single day.⁵

In research from 2009 (UK) into what children want from the BBC, nearly all of the participants said they thought news was interesting. The majority of those asked (61.8%) said news was interesting "sometimes", while over a third (34.8%) unequivocally said "yes".

Only three out of the 129 children taking part in the survey said they did not find news interesting.⁶

The researchers argue that the children's answers are "a strong riposte to those who argue that children and young people are apathetic and not concerned about current affairs".⁷

In more recent research, one in every four children in Norway in the age group 9-16 years old, said they follow the news every day, either on TV, computers, tablets or mobiles.⁸

You could argue that originally children's news was very adult-steered in the sense that children were being sat down in front of the TV at a scheduled time.

I think for a lot of our audience it's just part of their routine.⁹

However, this has all changed with all content switching to on-demand, and becoming available whenever it suits the audience. Children are increasingly finding content on their own, and so the interest in news is becoming more of a personal decision to seek out information, rather than being forced on them at certain times of the day.

This could mean that it is now easier to measure their interest towards the news, than before, (as will be argued in a later section on interaction).

¹ Lewis James, editor of BBC's Newsround, in an interview on 26 October 2015

² <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

³ <http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/survey/2015/motivations-for-watching-and-reading-the-news-2015>

^{4,5} 11 year old from Oslo, in Miriam Øyna/NRK, Children and the news, (findings and suggestions), august 2015

^{6,7} Cynthia Carter, Máire Messenger Davies, Stuart Allan, Kaitlynn Mendes: What Do Children Want from the BBC? Children's Content And Participatory Environments in an Age of Citizen Media, 2009

⁸ Barn og medier 2014, Barn o gunges (9-16) bruk og opplevelser av medier, Medietilsynet 2014

⁹ Sunita Bhatti, producer at BBC's Newsround, interviewed on 26 October 2015

CHILDREN'S NEWS IN EUROPE

In Europe there are currently 11 programmes aimed at producing news specifically for children which are all public broadcasters and part of the European Broadcasting Union.

They are in Slovenia, the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Germany, Ireland, United Kingdom, Norway, Denmark and the Czech Republic.

Their target audience is mainly 8-12 year olds, while three programmes aim at children as young as 6, and one programme aims at children up to 13 years old.

A few of these have been producing news for children for several decades (the BBC for as long as 40 years) and are considered experienced in the field, while some have emerged in the last decade, and are still trying to establish their style and form.

There are major differences in the way these programmes are run in terms of editorial teams. While there are bigger teams in the Netherlands (28) and the UK (22) working only on children's news, some countries have smaller teams such as Denmark (7), Ireland (4) and the Czech Republic (5).¹⁰

They produce TV bulletins, and most, but not all, produce online news content such as text, pictures, videos and quizzes. Now, several of the teams are also producing increasingly more content on social media such as Instagram, Snapchat and other apps.

The editorial teams include reporters, presenters, editors, researchers, producers and VJs, and amount to 136 people around Europe dedicated to children's news.¹¹

THE TRADITIONAL DAILY TV BULLETIN

Once upon a time, and not really that long ago, news for children came only in the shape of a TV bulletin with stories that had been carefully selected and shaped to inform young viewers in words they could understand and designed to alleviate any fear induced by "adult" hard news and current events.

The TV bulletin has been the chosen format for children's news around Europe for as long as 40 years, beginning with John Craven's Newsround at the BBC in 1972, followed by NOS' Jeugdjournaal in 1981, ZDF's logo! in 1989 and SVTs Lilla Aktuellt in 1993. In 2009, researchers in the UK found that more than 50% of the children in their survey mentioned TV as their "favourite place for news".¹² Five years later, in a Norwegian research, 9-16 year olds still say TV is where they are most likely to get their news, followed by news on a computer, on tablets and on mobiles.¹³ For a very long time there was no competition, and the afternoon TV bulletin was likely to be the first and only news consumed by children that day.

Once children were given access to computers at home and in schools, however, the need to have an online presence for children's news became obvious. Here they would get the news bulletin on demand, or get bite size stories which were posted, still in the shape of linear TV reportage.

Newsround's website was created in 2000 to "house summaries of its daily bulletin, background explainers of key news issues and competitions".¹⁴ Many programmes throughout Europe followed in their footsteps. 15 years later, children's news websites still contains the daily bulletin, but different content has emerged such as news articles with picture galleries, shorter videos and quizzes.



GLOBAL NEWSROOM, MORE CONTENT

If they accidentally are coming across ISIS beheadings, I'm not saying that's the internet's fault, but I don't think that would be appropriate for us to be covering on a day to day basis.¹⁵

We are currently living in a global newsroom. Wherever and whenever something is happening around the world, it can be published, streamed and spread live, as it's happening, and viewed from the other side of the world with ease.

Journalists have never had an easier task in gaining access to cases, pictures, videos and quotes about things that are happening around the world. The task of spreading news content is no longer reserved for media professionals. As people have gained technological access and knowledge, they too can spread content online which can be read, viewed and listened to by literally anyone within seconds.

Social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram,

^{10,11} Numbers from Youth News Exchange Annual Meeting, 2014

¹² Cynthia Carter, Máire Messenger Davies, Stuart Allan, Kaitlynn Mendes: What Do Children Want from the BBC? Children's Content And Participatory Environments in an Age of Citizen Media, 2009

¹³ Barn og medier 2014, Barn og unges (9-16) bruk og opplevelser av medier, Medietilsynet, 2014

¹⁴ Julian Matthews (2009) Negotiating News Childhoods, Journal of Children and Media, 3:1, 2-18, DOI: 10.1080/17482790802576949

¹⁵ Sunita Bhatti, producer at BBC's Newsround, interviewed on 26 October 2015

Snapchat, YouTube and Periscope have changed the world of news.

And so the amount of content available to us at this point is unlimited.

This fact could make it increasingly difficult for editorial teams to choose which stories to run every day, because there is no way to cover it all. We expect our audience to browse through the jungle of content for their preferred choice of news. But this is where the problems for children's news providers arise.

Their mandate is to present the news in a way that informs children about current events, explains them in words children can understand, and put news in a context which makes children understand the world around them. And importantly, which does not frighten them.

The news items of the day for a children's news programme could be chosen because it is of a certain importance. It is likely that the child will have seen the story elsewhere: on newspaper front pages, or heard it on the radio, perhaps seen it on television. Then there needs to be a version of this story especially made for children. The other criterion would be that the story is of particular interest to children, such as events involving other children, school matters or bullying (*more on criteria in a later section.*)

However, this growing choice of stories out there means that some news will be left out, and the result is that young people can easily turn to adult news and the internet to round out the lack of availability and diversity in children's news provision.¹⁶

We can no longer choose for them what to see, or hide the events of the world from children.

This only suggests that children's news programmes need to produce and deliver even more stories each day. If they don't cover the events, children will



go elsewhere. We cannot ensure that the news they see, hear or read elsewhere is presented in a way that children can process, understand and not end up worrying about.

There have always been stuff to scare children about the wider world, but I don't think it can be our job to protect them from all the harm that is out there. That's parents' job. I think if it's a big enough story, yes, we should be explaining it in a way that puts it into context and provide an explanation and counter balance some of that scariness, but that doesn't mean that we should do every school shooting that happens in America.¹⁷

Because what happens to the quality and "child proofing" of our news if we were to publish everything that happened?

Journalists working with children's news confirm that they produce more content than before. In fact 6 out of 10 who recently responded to a survey for this report (see *appendix p.14*) said they produce more stories online than just a few years back.

I do agree that we are putting out more content. You could argue that the quality might suffer, but everything I do I treat with, and do to my absolute best.¹⁸

6 out of 10 also say that they write four or more stories online each day. Not all editorial teams have dedicated online journalists, and therefore many of these are also producing other content.

If you're asked to do more things at the same time, you've got very little choice but to finish and end where you might want to continue, writing more paragraphs and continue and carry on with something new. That is complete as it is, but it could be more to it, but we're choosing as a group that that's enough, let's move on.¹⁹

16.7% of the journalists answering the survey, say they spend up to 30 minutes on an online news story for children, while 60% said they spend an average of 31-60 minutes creating an online story. 26.7% say this amount of time has changed over the past few years.

We might be producing the same amount or more, but it's not in the same depth, the actual word count wouldn't be as long. Things have definitely changed, and the pages are less word heavy and I personally don't think, or I know, that we're not doing as much as we used to.²⁰

The question then becomes this: when a journalist creates more content in a day, and the time spent on creating each item of content decreases, what does that do to the information included, and how does it alter the content?

Some of the journalists' own replies to the survey suggest that they do not, in fact, spend less time writing the story, rather spending more time adding other content to the site.

I spend more time now because I look to add video and photos to my online stories. This helps add context or gives our audience another piece of the jigsaw.

¹⁶ Cowling, J. and Lee, K. (2002) "They have been watching: Broadcaster's provision of children's and young people's TV from 1952-2002", Institute for Public Policy Research, London, 30 August

^{17, 20} Sunita Bhatti, producer at BBCs Newsround, interviewed on 26 October 2015

^{18, 19} William Pilkinton, assistant producer at BBCs Newsround, interviewed on 26 October 2015

Another factor to take into account is that the processes for getting content up online has been speeded up, and this may in fact shorten the amount of time a journalist spends on writing an article or creating a web page of content.

I don't worry about the quality here, I worry more that perhaps we haven't done everything that we'd like to do. Every day we have a wish list, you might be doing lots, but there's always a lot more that you could do.²¹

One journalist simply suggests that seeing that children have become such sophisticated users of online content, we have to do better than before.

Children spend more time online than in the past, so the quality needs to be as good as on TV. Children expect being taken seriously; you cannot just copy/paste adult news items.

HOME ALONE

That children spend more time online now compared to the past is an understatement.

And increasingly, young people depend on their smartphones for news.²²

According to a recent survey in Norway, 9 out of 10 year-olds own their own smartphone. Of the 6-9 year-olds, four out of 10 have their own smartphone.²³

They are just there in their pockets, as rectangular objects of temptation, 24 hours a day.

Despite some children being given restrictions at school and some at home when they're around the dinner table, going online on a smartphone is very much a private activity.

The original TV news bulletin created for children was aired at a time when adults were around to answer questions; either in the afternoon with your parents



BBC Newsround

present, or at school in classrooms with teachers in immediate proximity.

The same could be said about the web sites as they were first accessed by children on their parents' computers or laptops. If a news story raised any questions or children were left in doubt of a current event or issue, they had someone to discuss them with.

In fact, it has even been recommended to expose children to hard news, as long as you discuss it with them afterwards. One of the supporters of this view is Carla Thompson at Parents and Children Together (PACT) in the UK. She has suggested that parents should not shield young people from the truth which, she believes, makes them more anxious and upset when traumatic

events occur. But instead talk to their sons and daughters about news stories that frighten them.²⁴

Now, however, when accessing news on their smart phones, children are very often doing so in private.

Researchers have recently found, through interviews with thousands of children around Europe, that "with the arrival of smartphones and tablets and the convergence of technologies, device use has become ever more intimate. With the miniaturisation of mobile devices it becomes even more possible to view or read in even more private places. Children are more able to create their own personal connections to the internet away from public oversight or control".²⁵

²¹ Sunita Bhatti, producer at BBC's Newsround, interviewed on 26 October 2015

²² Reuters Institute's Digital News Report 2015, <http://www.digitalnewsreport.org>

²³ <http://www.nrk.no/kultur/ni-av-ti-tiaringer-har-egen-smarttelefon-1.12474080>

²⁴ News Organisations and Young People: A Case Study of BBC Newsround, Cynthia Carter and Stuart Allan, 2005

²⁵ Mobile Opportunities: Exploring positive mobile media opportunities for European children, Jane Vincent, 2015

As a result, news accessed on a smartphone might be more difficult to be discussed or picked up by an adult, because they are not around in the same way as they were before.

We cannot ensure that the content they access from other sites or apps is suitable for their age group. But knowing that they often sit on their own watching, reading, listening – the significance of the quality provided by children’s news programmes must surely be more important than ever.

It is crucial to ensure that the content provided is good enough, comprehensive enough and doesn’t leave the children wondering.

COMPETITION

Traditionally, one of the criteria for producing children’s news has been to wait with publishing a breaking story until the event has settled.

This has been important in order to give a full story, with few loose ends and in order to include information that could dampen fear, such as “the killer has now been put in jail”, or “it has been confirmed”, rather than “we still don’t know what can happen”.

Researchers have found that without an end to the story the meaning making process is challenged. What secures the meaning of the story is coherence and a logical link between the different happenings, and then the end.²⁶

This means that if a child is left with many questions after having read or seen a news story, they are likely to search for an answer or meaning within their own understanding. That can lead to them having a flawed picture of the world and the events in the news. In several instances, this unsupported search for closure to

the narrative appeared to create a narrative template for dramatic events, causing more fear.²⁷

17% of the journalists questioned in the survey on how children’s news is changing, said their priorities have changed in recent years as to when they publish a story.

They now say that they publish a story earlier than they would a few years back.

One of the journalists questioned explains it like this:

Even though we often still wait a day or two, I think we can be more tempted to publish earlier than before.

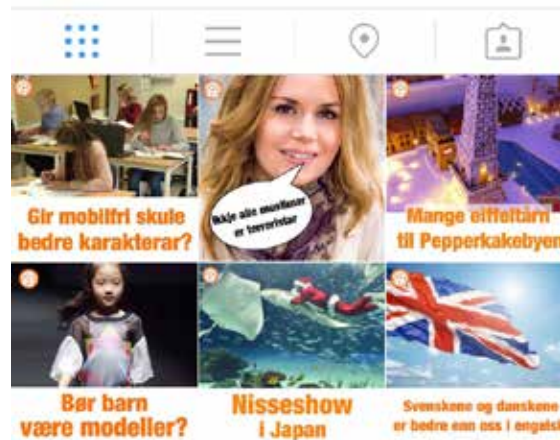
When asked if they think the competition between online news sites results in them having less time to tailor their news stories for children, 13% say yes, while 73% still say no.

Explaining the reasons for why they shouldn’t be tempted to be first with a story, one journalist says this:

If something scary happens, we will not get time to see if the situation “cools down”. (...) Meaning we would probably publish our story before we have enough information to dampen fear. The line between children and adult news can get more blurry.

Despite the fact that half of the respondents in the survey think that children do go to other news sites for their updates, (sites that are not especially meant for children) – they still don’t think these web sites present competition or that they affect their own choice of news stories.

I think you have to be aware of where else they might get their news from, but I don’t think we’re generally looking at what other outlets are providing, we are determining it more from what our channel, what the BBC are putting out, and what is relevant to our audience.²⁸



NEW PLATFORMS AND FORMATS

However, there is no doubt that new platforms and formats are emerging, and that they need to be recognised.

Journalists producing news for children are well aware that their audience get their stories elsewhere.

93.3% of respondents to the survey for this report consider Instagram as a source of news for this audience.

Kids news programmes must be very adaptable; we must discuss and exchange knowledge with kids to know more about their interests.²⁹

According to the Digital News Report 2015, younger people’s use of social media is interwoven with their news consumption. It is used as a key source, and provides “bump into” content.³⁰

In the report they find that “the move to online video, new visual formats and social media as a source for news is a trend most pronounced amongst the under 35s”.³¹

²⁶ Penne S. Litteratur og Film i Klasserommet: Didaktikk for Ungdomstrinn og Videregående Skole/Fictional Texts and Films: Didtics for Lower and Upper Secondary School. Oslo Universitetsforl, 2010 Norwegian

²⁷ Jørgensen, Beate Fosse, Skarstein, Dag, Schultz, Jon-Håkon. Psychology Research and Behavior Management 2015:8 51-61

²⁸ William Pilkinton, assistant producer at BBCs Newsround, interviewed on 26th October 2015

²⁹ Journalist working with children’s news, in a survey for this report, September 2015 (see appendix p.14)

³⁰ Preston, Digital News Report 2015/Reuters Insitute, https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Reuters%20Institute%20Digital%20News%20Report%202015_Full%20Report.pdf

³¹ https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Reuters%20Institute%20Digital%20News%20Report%202015_Full%20Report.pdf

The TV bulletin is still considered the main platform for delivering news for children, but because of their need to adapt and show their presence where children actually spend their time, the use of these new platforms have become an integral part of everyday life for journalists working with children's news around Europe.

Seeing that news accessed via Facebook is likely to be links shared from other websites, the main focus of production on new platforms is where journalists can make their own content.

When we talk to children they say that "Facebook and Twitter is where your parents are", so it is all about Instagram and Snapchat.³²

Instagram, the photo and video sharing app has had incredible growth since its launch in October 2010.

On 22nd September 2015, Instagram had 400 million users worldwide, and approximately 80 million photos and videos were shared every single day.³³

As well as being able to share moments of your daily life with friends and family, Instagram has become a major channel of publicity for celebrities.

This content, which would previously have required an exclusive invite into celebrities' personal lives, to obtain, is now about to make the paparazzi redundant.

There is no wonder 13 year olds all over the world log on, when you get Justin Bieber taking pictures of his shirtless self in front of the mirror even before you've made it to school that day, or when Taylor Swift invites you along to her birthday celebrations or her holidays and serves you more personal and intimate information and pictures than any magazine would ever do.

Justin Bieber currently has 41.2 million followers on Instagram,

while Taylor Swift currently holds the top position of having the most followers with 51.5 million.

These young stars have mastered the art of picture sharing on Instagram, and of course are helped by the fact that they are immensely popular. So if these millions of young people log on every day, then everyone who wants these children's attention should log on too.

While Instagram functions as a photo album where pictures are posted along with a short description or text, and can be accessed whenever you like and for as long as you like, another big social media platform has chosen a different approach to picture and video sharing.

Snapchat, which was created by students at Stanford University and launched in 2011, is a picture messaging app where the images or videos disappear shortly after they have been viewed.

The pictures can be sent between users who have accepted each other's' acquaintance on the app and are shown for as long as the sender want the receiver to see the picture, but only for a maximum of ten seconds.

Stories on Snapchat are made up of a number of pictures or videos put together and can be viewed as many times as you like within 24 hours of it being published. These are also only viewable by followers. According to Snapchat, they have nearly 100 million daily active users, there are more than 4 billion video views on the app every day, and their target users are no doubt young people.

In their own words: "Snapchat is the best way to reach 13 to 34 year-olds".³⁴

Social media is where the children are. So if you take an example like Instagram, at the moment I would say that's probably the number one place we would want to be.³⁵



Faced with the fact that children's attention is focused elsewhere, children's news providers are taking new steps in ensuring that they are present in these new spheres.

Around half of the 11 programmes specializing in children's news in Europe and within the EBU are now making content on platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat.

And for the rest of them, the reasons for choosing not to be on these new platforms are mainly down to legal issues, and not a reluctance towards it or lack of ambition to be present on social media.

The minimum age requirement for having an account on Instagram and Snapchat is 13 years old. Several public broadcasters are therefore reluctant to go against these restrictions to provide content for their audience, which are younger.

Many still have plans to start producing content on these platforms, but are waiting for the permission to overcome the restrictions within their own organisations.

³² Sunita Bhatti, producer at BBCs Newsround interviewed on 26 October 2015

³³ <https://instagram.com/press/>

³⁴ Snapchat.com

³⁵ Lewis James, editor of BBCs Newsround, in an interview on 26 October 2015

I think that the argument that we would try and build with the public and parents is going to be that many, many kids are on these platforms already. We can't police the internet for your children, but what we can do is provide safe content in a safe place and we can be verified in doing that so you know that when you look at Newsround on a social media platform you know it's us.³⁶



Supernytt, NRK

In fact, around half of 11 and 12 year olds in the UK have an underage profile, according to research done in 2013.³⁷ And in an Ofcom report published in October last year, 20% of all 8-11 year olds who go online, have a social media profile.³⁸

With ever more children owning their own personal smartphones, this number is likely to have risen.

As for those programmes around Europe who have created official profiles and are now producing content on Instagram and Snapchat, there seems to be different approaches to what this content should be.

Some are creating "stand-alone" news items (such as DRs Ultra Nyt or NRKs Supernytt), while others are using their Instagram accounts to give additional coverage of their editorial teams, in more of a 'behind the scenes' report of their daily lives (such as RTVSLOs Infodrom or SVTs Lilla Aktuellt).

We are present on social media to be just that, social. We use the account as an addition to our other content to let our audience see what we're up to. We have no ambitions to explain news or difficult matters on these platforms.³⁹

Instagram gives our viewers the opportunity to watch our editorial office and providing them with moments of our working process.⁴⁰

While some editors of children's news programmes think these new platforms should complement traditional media, and can be

treated completely different to the well-known content, others are trying to tweak the news production in order to fit the traditional news into the new formats.

Instagram gives our viewers the opportunity to watch our editorial office and providing them with moments of our working process.⁴¹

The Instagram account for NRKs Supernytt currently has more than 36000⁴² followers, and the number has been steadily rising since they created their account 12 months ago. Seeing that there are currently 300.000 children in the target audience in Norway, this means more than one in every ten children follows these news update on Instagram (we do not, however, know that all followers are in this age group, even though that is the target audience for the account).

Danish Ultra Nyts Instagram account currently has around 22000 followers.⁴³

Both Supernytt and Ultra Nyt say they want these accounts to serve as an individual platform for news, and see this as an opportunity to create more content and add diversity to their audience.

Both Instagram and Snapchat are as natural and serious platforms for news as television. It gives us a broader range of news because some stories are better suited for television, while some are better suited for social media platforms.⁴⁴

Even though difficult matters could prove complicated to present, they don't necessarily

think that these platforms should only address the light, entertaining news stories.

I really do believe that in principle, all issues and themes could be addressed in these media.⁴⁵

There are, however, a number of challenges facing children's news producers if journalists are to treat these new platforms as a "normal" news channel.

Space for the traditional explanations is one major aspect of this.

We have to be extremely precise in our wordings, as there is little room to explain.⁴⁶

Failing to be precise can offer new challenges, as the editor of Infodrom, Janja Lakner Anžin, suggests:

The disadvantage is the interpretation of content, which may be misunderstood.

NEW CHALLENGES, SAME CRITERIA

Young people (and their parents) value children's news and associated websites, "particularly at times of crisis, conflict and danger" precisely because they are able to explain what is happening in a way that is both understandable and reassuring.⁴⁷

In a case study of BBCs children's news programme Newsround, it was mentioned that "there is a generally held view that

³⁶ Lewis James, editor of BBCs Newsround, in an interview on 26 October 2015

³⁷ Lilley, C. and Ball, R., 2013, Youngerchildren and social networking sites: a blind spot. London: NSPCC

³⁸ Children and Parents: Media Use and Attitudes Report, Ofcom, October 2014

³⁹ Malin Lundgren, editor of Swedish Lilla Aktuellt, in an email on 15 October 2015

⁴⁰ Janja Lakner Anžin, editor of Infodrom in Slovenia, in an email on 19 October 2015

^{41,45,46} Frank Sivertsen, editor of NRKs Supernytt, in an email on 27 October 2015

⁴² As of 4th November 2015, their account has 36.5k followers

⁴³ As of 4th November 2015, their account has 21.8k followers

⁴⁴ Tommy Zwicky, editor of DRs Ultra Nyt, in an email on 29 October 2015

⁴⁷ Ofcom's 2007 report "The Future of Children's Television Programming" in Citizenship and Public Service: The Case of BBC News Online. Thorsen, Einar, Allan, Stuart, Carter, Cynthia (2009), in Web Journalism: a new form of citizenship? Sean Tunney and Garrett Monaghan, 2010

Newsround television journalists already know their audience, what they want and how best to address them. For example, there is broad agreement of the need to keep the bulletin simple, in terms of language use, content and presentational style, so that it can easily be understood by a typical 10 year old child".⁴⁸

The criteria which forms the basis of children's news reporting around Europe has been developed through close contact with psychologists, school teachers and of course children.

In meeting with children on a daily basis through news production, as well as sessions set up specifically to ask children for advice on content, journalists learn what subjects children are interested in, as well as what is suitable in terms of language, explanations and so forth.

*I think we do enough with our audience to be confident about what we're doing. And I think they would tell us if it was wrong. We'd get the feedback, we'd certainly get the feedback from teachers, I'm sure.*⁴⁹

This knowledge was established a long time ago, and has been passed on to journalists in this field for more than four decades (with the longest running programme in the UK). Throughout Europe media professionals are also meeting and exchanging ideas within The EUROVISION Youth News Exchange on a regular basis, to make sure they are updated on the latest research and developments in the field.

Some of the guidelines and criteria for producing children's news include giving simple explanations to complicated matters, to put events in perspective by explaining the likelihood of an event reoccurring, and to limit the size and amount of graphic content.⁵⁰

News for children should not only give information about an event, but knowledge of why things are



happening, and therefore become part of an education. It is also important that you give children the impression that they can do something about the news, so that they don't feel overwhelmed by the world, but end up feeling like they can act.⁵¹

These common guidelines have been adopted by all journalists working with children's news around Europe, and do not seem to have changed with the development of the new formats.

When asked what their main criteria when producing online news for children are, journalists around Europe said to inform (90%), to explain (86.7%), to entertain (66.7%), to give in depth information (46.7%) and to dampen fear (46.7%) (see appendix p.14). We can assume

that children in 2015 are more media savvy and more experienced in both accessing and utilizing the ever increasing media universe that exist, but we still have to bear in mind that an eight-year old in 2015 still is not more clever, more mature or any more "news experienced" than an eight-year old in 2010.

POSITIVE CHANGE, INTERACTIVITY

In the case that children's news providers struggle to give the thorough, traditional explanations and proper depth in their news items on social media, another important addition to these specific platforms must be addressed.

⁴⁸ News Organisations and Young People: A Case Study of BBC Newsround, Cynthia Carter and Stuart Allan, 2005

⁴⁹ Sunita Bhatti, producer at BBC's Newsround, interviewed on 26 October 2015

⁵⁰ Guidelines for journalists from experts at New York University's Child Study Center, Child Sensitive Media Coverage of Trauma and Tragedy, www.aboutourkids.org/articles/child_sensitive_media.html

⁵¹ Voksne undervurderer børns interesse for nyheder, Else Marie Nygaard/Kristelig Dagblad online, 9 March 2013

*Through social media we are in direct contact with our target audience throughout the day. We are, perhaps for the very first time, having a real dialogue with our audience.*⁵²

It has never been easier to talk to audiences, and give immediate response to their concerns or enquiries.

*Because children use Instagram in incredibly sophisticated ways, where they have genuinely multimedia conversations with each other – that has huge benefits for us. We can then see us being a fully interactive service where we respond to the needs and the questions and the worries that our audience have in real time potentially.*⁵³

Not only can they get answers and clarifying comments from journalists, the children also use comment fields online and on social media to answer each other's questions or correct misunderstandings.

*These interactions from one child to another also make it easier for us to see whether or not they have understood the messages or news we have provided.*⁵⁴

But as journalists explain, this is also one of their main concerns; that questions are being left unanswered. As comments can be posted around the clock, moderation of these will potentially have to be watched 24/7.

As children are quick to correct one another, wrong information can also be distributed and left for hours without being contradicted.

*One of the biggest challenges of comments on social media can be that we don't see them when they are posted. The same goes for inappropriate comments.*⁵⁵

Children are, not surprisingly, no different to adults when it comes to trolling and cyber bullying. Leaving unpleasant comments

seems to be easier online and on social media than doing so face to face.

*We prefer not to moderate their comments too much. But sometimes it is a sheer necessity. This balance, between having a free space to discuss and comment, while still not being exposed to unpleasant and personal attacks, can be hard to find.*⁵⁶

As the editor for NOS' Jeugdjournaal explains, "in extreme cases we block users that misbehave". In 2013, 23% of all 11 and 12 year olds in the UK who had their own social networking site profile said they had been upset by something on it over the last year. 20% of these experienced something that upset them every day or almost every day.⁵⁷

As these social media platforms are not meant for under 13 year olds, the providers of these say they do not give out "bespoke advice for children, because they are not supposed to have a profile on their sites".⁵⁸

However, journalists working with children's news, and who are now moderators of comments on these social media sites, say they in many ways are "parenting or training children in online etiquette and appropriate discussions".

*In the beginning we spent a lot of time correcting their behaviour, such as "we do not want any cursing, your message has been deleted", and "remember to keep a pleasant climate for discussion", "that is not the way to speak to one another, your message has been deleted".*⁵⁹

The impression is now, they say, that their comments contain less cursing, less spamming, such as repeating a comment or a follow request many times in a row, and that the discussion remains revolved around the news or story that has been posted.

*I think they perceive us as trustworthy adults who have time to listen to them, with a clear message and great knowledge about pretty much everything.*⁶⁰

The interaction following a news item should, however, never replace the information given in the actual news story. This seems to be a shared notion amongst both journalists and editors.

Even if the formats change and the word count is eventually smaller than the traditional news items, journalists should still aim to include every important piece of information in the initial account.

*I would argue that we should never assume or base our reports on the fact that they can ask questions afterwards.*⁶¹

One important argument in this discussion is that the information given by journalists in the comment fields afterwards often only reaches the user having posed the question. This is because they get notifications if someone has spoken to them – @ user.

*My experience is that they only read comments that are directed to themselves or someone they know or have discussed the matter with, (in the event that they have reached out to other users – @ user).*⁶²

However, the undisputed, positive fact of this interaction and daily dialogue with the target audience is that journalists are in constant contact with their audience.

It provides continuous insight into their current interests and needs, and could potentially increase children's awareness of news programmes' existence, and build a relationship of community and trust for the products that they provide.

*There is no doubt that it makes the relationship with our audience better.*⁶³

⁵² Kristine Magnesen, head of social media at NRKs Supernytt, in an email on 29 October 2015

⁵³ Lewis James, editor of BBCs Newsround, interviewed on 26 October 2015

^{54, 55, 61, 63} Daria Zoric, journalist/producer at NRKs Supernytt, in an email on 28 October 2015

⁵⁶ Tommy Zwicky, editor of DRs Ultra Nyt, in an email on 29 October 2015

^{57, 58} Lilley, C. and Ball, R. (2013) Youngerchildren and social networking sites: a blind spot, London: NSPCC

^{59, 60, 62} Kristine Magnesen, head of social media at NRKs Supernytt, in an email on 29 October 2015

THE FUTURE OF CHILDREN'S NEWS

Certainly the area for growth is going to be away from television, we know that.⁶⁴

Many of the editors who are now struggling to adapt to the changes of new media platforms due to restrictions, are expressing concerns that they are not able to keep up with their audience.

We are fighting a huge battle right now to be allowed on social media.⁶⁵

This results in the fact that the pioneers in the field of children's news could be in danger of falling behind because of the strength of their own traditions.

The fear is obviously then that once public broadcasters manage to show their presence on platforms where children frequent, they have already moved on.

However, rather than running after our audiences, it could be a case of forming a robust foundation which can be used on multiple platforms, such as Newsround's editor, Lewis James, suggests:

If you get your social media strategy right I think it's not about choosing which platforms to go on, it's about choosing a set of principles and a set of structures to work with on whatever platform. In that way, once you've decided that, then you can be nimble.

So, is there a need for specialized children's news in the digital era? Feedback from users still suggest that there is.

Throughout Europe children's news programmes experience that teachers use their bulletins on television and their content online to introduce children to news and develop an interest and an engagement for what is going on around the world and in their own local areas.

Bear in mind that the target audience is 8-12 years old, they will still be steered by adults in much of the activities they seek out and the choices they make, which also includes their interest in the news.

Increasingly, however, children will also explore news media on their own and with their own initiative find these programmes, as we see with social media in several countries. This could prove to be the core of the future purpose or survival of children's news programmes.

Recent American research suggests that creating content on new platforms and in modern formats is essential in order to get children's attention, at least if we want them to come to us, and not the other way around.

Up to eight times more Americans aged 13 to 34 years say they would choose to view Live Stories on Snapchat rather than TV.⁶⁶

There is an increasing amount of content out there, and the amount of suppliers of this content will only multiply as technology evolves. But one of the disadvantages is, as one journalist points out, that the content will not necessarily be all in one place.

I think we can still remain relevant by offering audiences a one stop shop to go find the information they need.⁶⁷

As findings from this report suggests, children's news providers are producing more content than ever before. As public broadcasters around Europe are experiencing cuts rather than a growth in staff, one can assume that these growing numbers of news items are being produced by not more, but the same amount of people as before.

The question therefore still remains, how does the information we provide alter with the ever growing competition and increasing speed in which we produce our content?



Supernytt, NRK

In order to establish whether or not this has an effect on our audience, further research into children's perception of the news in the digital era, is recommended. Surveys and interviews with children in the target audience could suggest whether or not sufficient information is provided in news items of shorter length both in online articles, in videos and especially on social media platforms.

It would be interesting, and most likely necessary, to see what children want from public broadcasters in terms of news on different platforms, to form a strategy of where children's news programmes should focus their efforts and skills development in the future.

⁶⁴ Lewis James, editor of BBC's Newsround, interviewed on 26 October 2015

⁶⁵ Markus Mörchen, editor of ZDF's Logo, in an email on 15 October 2015

⁶⁶ Source: Snapchat internal data; Nielsen NPOWER. C3. 11/17/2014-02/28/2015

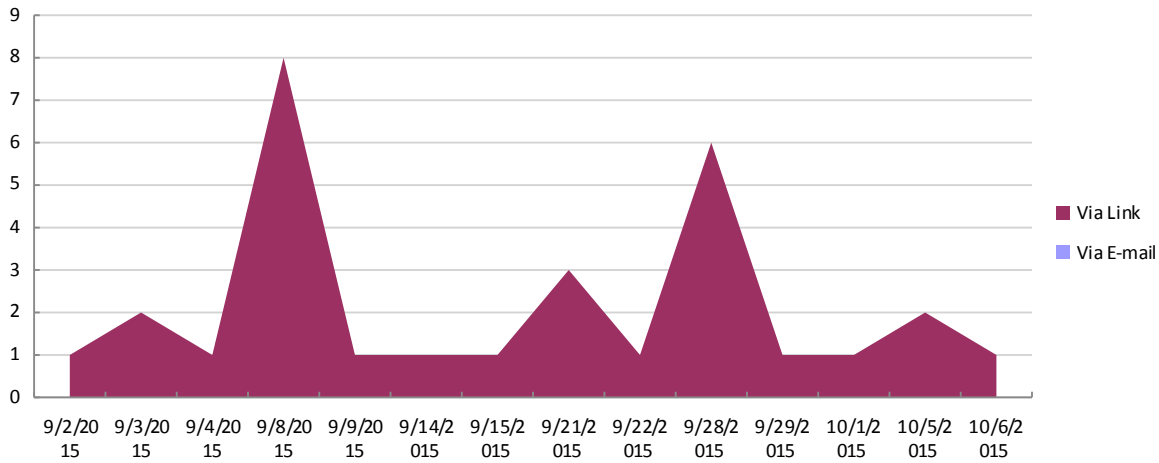
⁶⁷ Sunita Bhatti, producer at BBC's Newsround, interviewed on 26th October 2015

APPENDIX

News reporting for children

1. Response Log

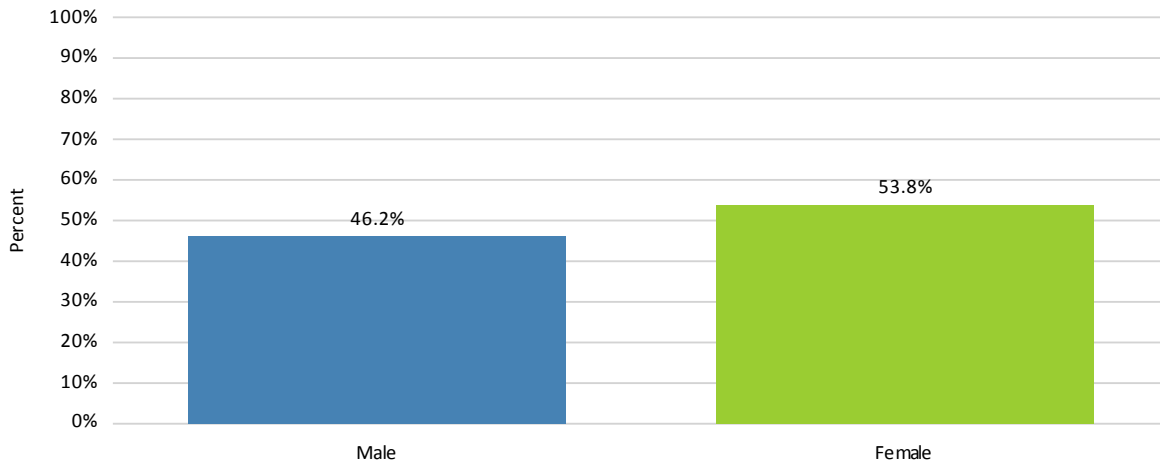
30 Responses | **1** Unique Respondents | **0** Via e-mail distribution | **1** Via link distribution



Date	Via E-mail	Via Link	Sum
9/2/2015	0	1	1
9/3/2015	0	2	2
9/4/2015	0	1	1
9/8/2015	0	8	8
9/9/2015	0	1	1
9/14/2015	0	1	1
9/15/2015	0	1	1
9/21/2015	0	3	3
9/22/2015	0	1	1
9/28/2015	0	6	6
9/29/2015	0	1	1
10/1/2015	0	1	1
10/5/2015	0	2	2
10/6/2015	0	1	1

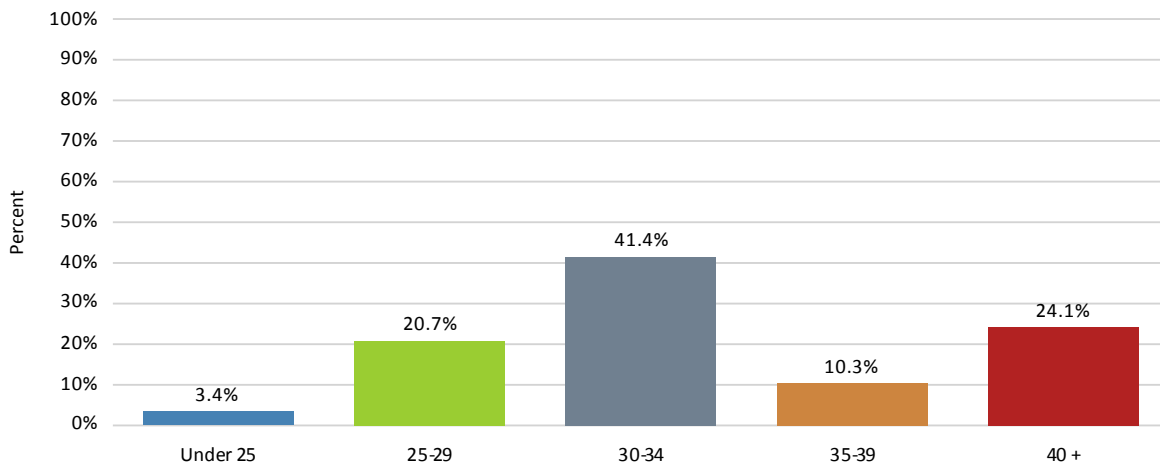
Powered by www.questback.com

2. What is your gender?



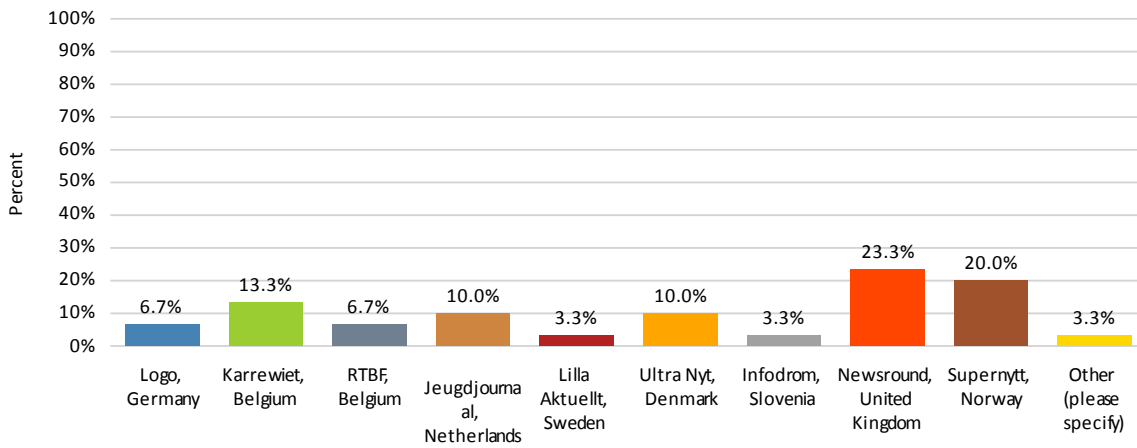
Name	Percent
Male	46.2%
Female	53.8%
N	26

3. What is your age?



Name	Percent
Under 25	3.4%
25-29	20.7%
30-34	41.4%
35-39	10.3%
40 +	24.1%
N	29

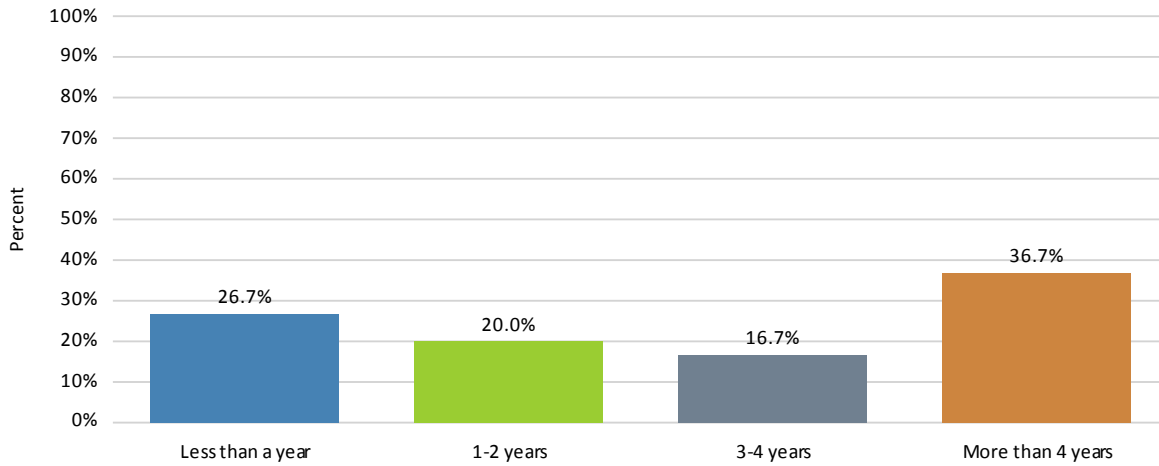
4. What news channel do you work for?



Name	Percent
Logo, Germany	6.7%
Karrewiet, Belgium	13.3%
RTBF, Belgium	6.7%
Jeugdjournaal, Netherlands	10.0%
Lilla Aktuellt, Sweden	3.3%
Ultra Nyt, Denmark	10.0%
Infodrom, Slovenia	3.3%
Newsround, United Kingdom	23.3%
Supernytt, Norway	20.0%
Other (please specify)	3.3%
N	30

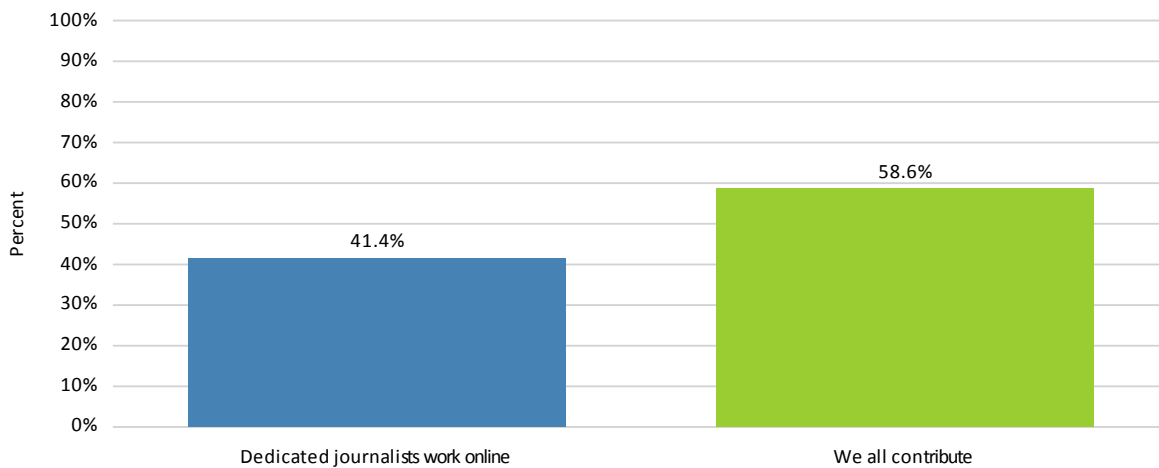
5. How long have you been producing online news for children?

Please answer all the questions on behalf of yourself only, and not your news channel, unless stated otherwise.



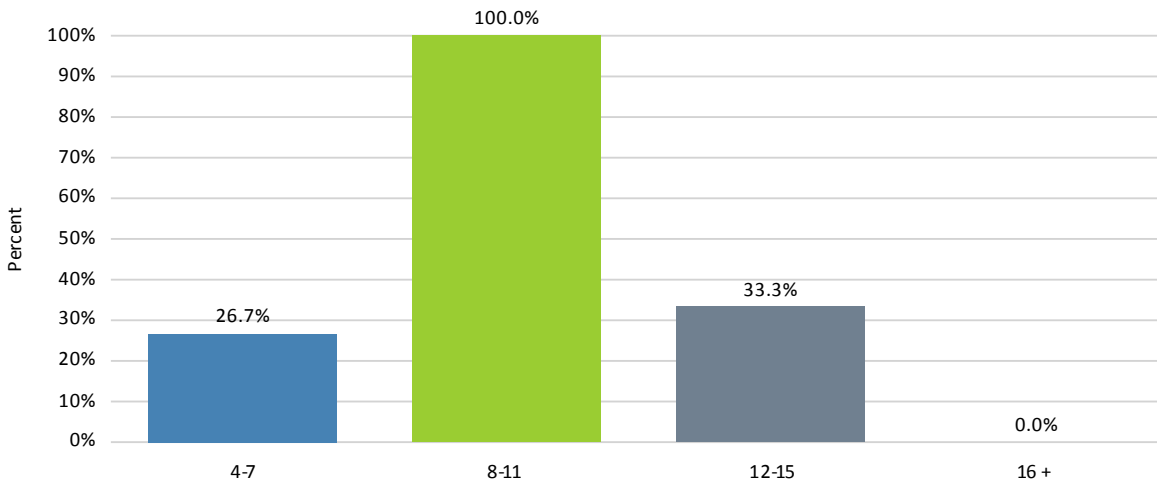
Name	Percent
Less than a year	26.7%
1-2 years	20.0%
3-4 years	16.7%
More than 4 years	36.7%
N	30

6. At your news channel, do you have a dedicated person/persons for web publishing, or does every journalist contribute?



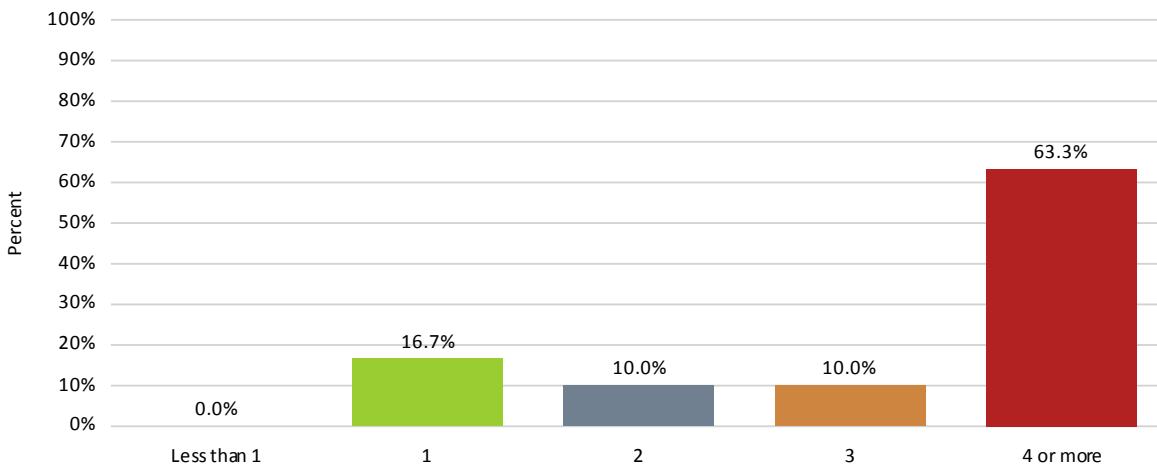
Name	Percent
Dedicated journalists work online	41.4%
We all contribute	58.6%
N	29

7. What age group do you write for? (you may tick more than one option)



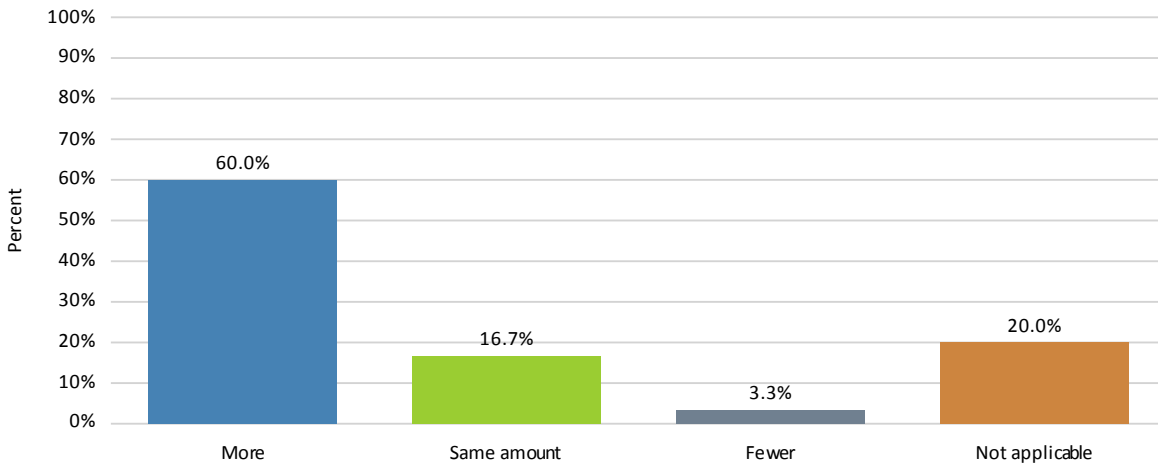
Name	Percent
4-7	26.7%
8-11	100.0%
12-15	33.3%
16+	0.0%
N	30

8. On average, how many news stories for children do you publish online every day?



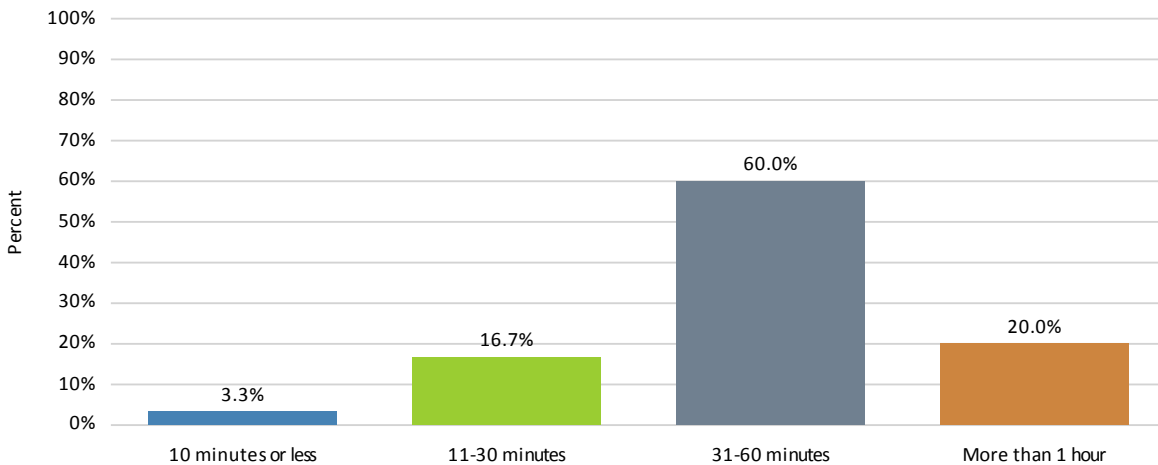
Name	Percent
Less than 1	0.0%
1	16.7%
2	10.0%
3	10.0%
4 or more	63.3%
N	30

9. Do you produce more, same amount or fewer stories online for children than a few years back?



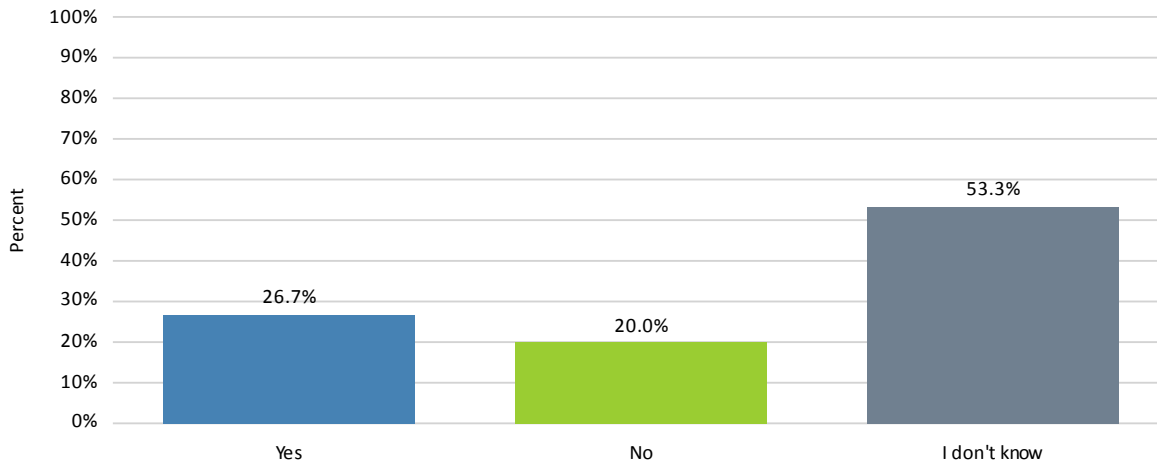
Name	Percent
More	60.0%
Same amount	16.7%
Fewer	3.3%
Not applicable	20.0%
N	30

10. On average, how much time do you spend creating an online news story for children?



Name	Percent
10 minutes or less	3.3%
11-30 minutes	16.7%
31-60 minutes	60.0%
More than 1 hour	20.0%
N	30

11. Has this amount of time changed over the past few years?



Name	Percent
Yes	26.7%
No	20.0%
I don't know	53.3%
N	30

12. Why do you think you spend more or less time now than before?

We are spending morev time producing content for social media like Instagram and Snapchat

it takes some more time because we try to have more Information, more Background Information, more Videos, interviews with experts ...

More time for example to post photos on Facebook or instagram.

We have recently developed our website to make it more attractive to our viewers and also for teacher,s as our programme is shown in a lot of schools. We have developed some tips on how teachers can use our programme as a useful class lesson.

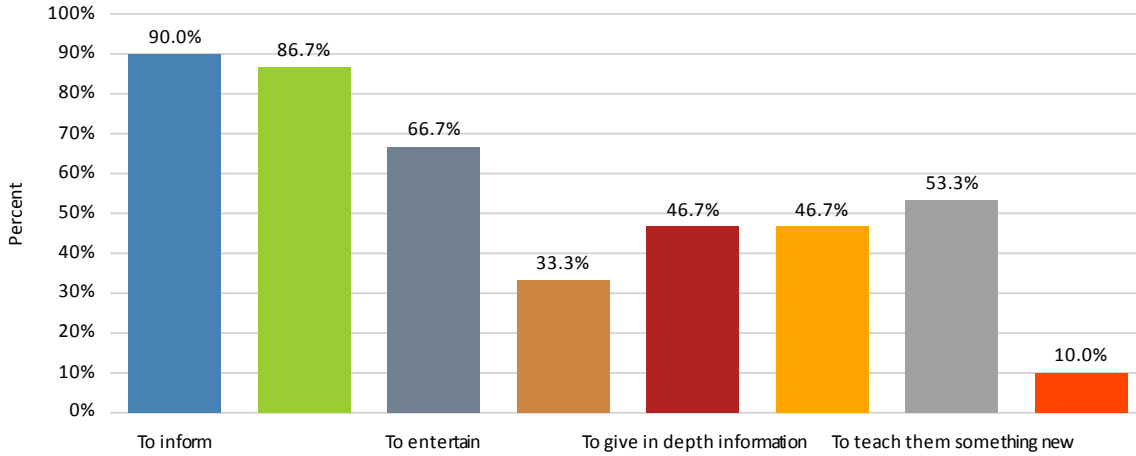
It has to be good, because children spent more time online than in the past. So the quality needs to be as good as on tv. Children expect being taken serious. You cannot just copy paste adult news items.

We publish less articles that before and that we would like to due to lack of funds for web editor/journalist. So in that light I spend less time. Since I have more experience in writing and also in connecting stories (hyperlinks; "we also recommend you to read this ..") it takes me less time to complete one article. I have also gained experience in searching for (credible) sources of information and I have establish my own network of teachers, organizations, schools etc which provide me with information.

I spend more time now because I look to add video and photos to my online stories. This helps adds context or gives our audience another piece of the jigsaw.

Because writing for childen take more time.

13. What are your main criteria when producing an online news story for children? (you may tick more than one option)



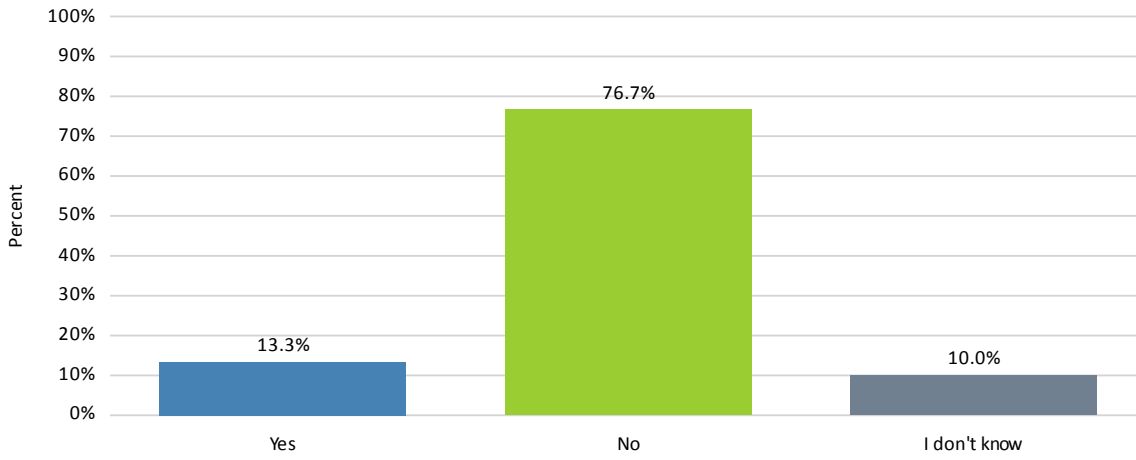
Name	Percent
To inform	90.0%
To explain	86.7%
To entertain	66.7%
To update	33.3%
To give in depth information	46.7%
To dampen fear	46.7%
To teach them something new	53.3%
Other (please specify)	10.0%
N	30

Stories where audience can take action (polls, wquiz, tests, chats etc)

to create a link, a community

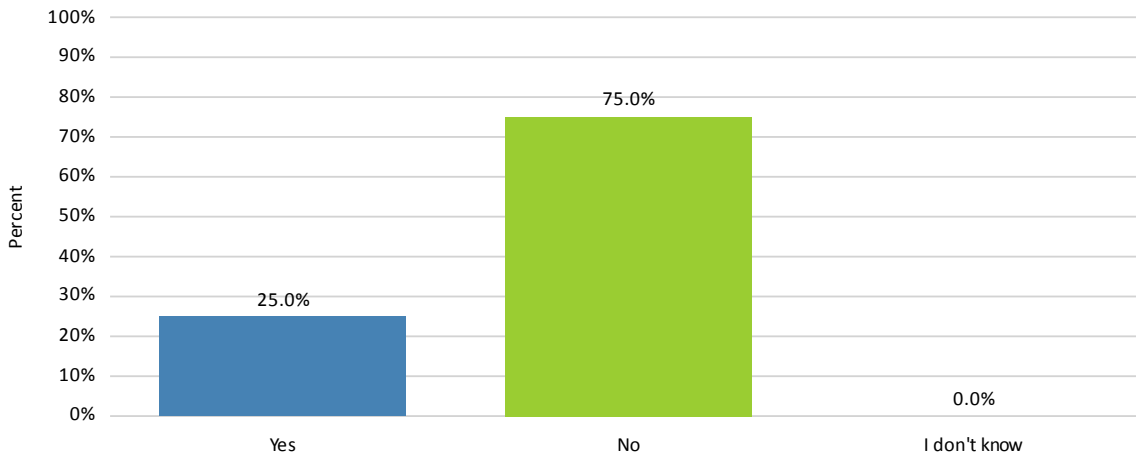
to give them a more different view of the world

14. Do you consider other news websites meant for adults as a competition to yours?



Name	Percent
Yes	13.3%
No	76.7%
I don't know	10.0%
N	30

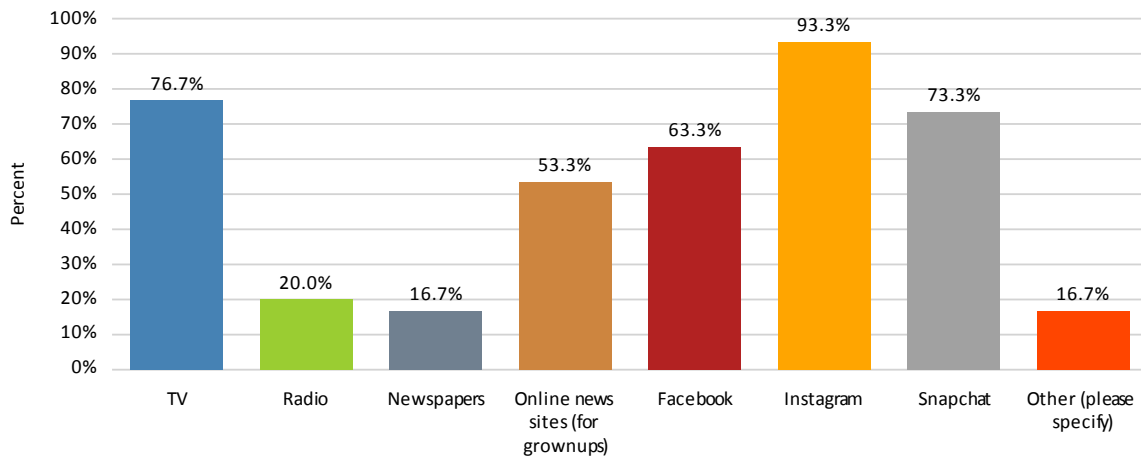
15. Does the competition affect your choice of news stories?



Name	Percent
Yes	25.0%
No	75.0%
I don't know	0.0%
N	4

16. How does it affect your choice? (please elaborate)

17. What other news sources do you see as alternatives for your audience? (you may tick more than one option)



Name	Percent
TV	76.7%
Radio	20.0%
Newspapers	16.7%
Online news sites (for grownups)	53.3%
Facebook	63.3%
Instagram	93.3%
Snapchat	73.3%
Other (please specify)	16.7%
N	30

YouTube

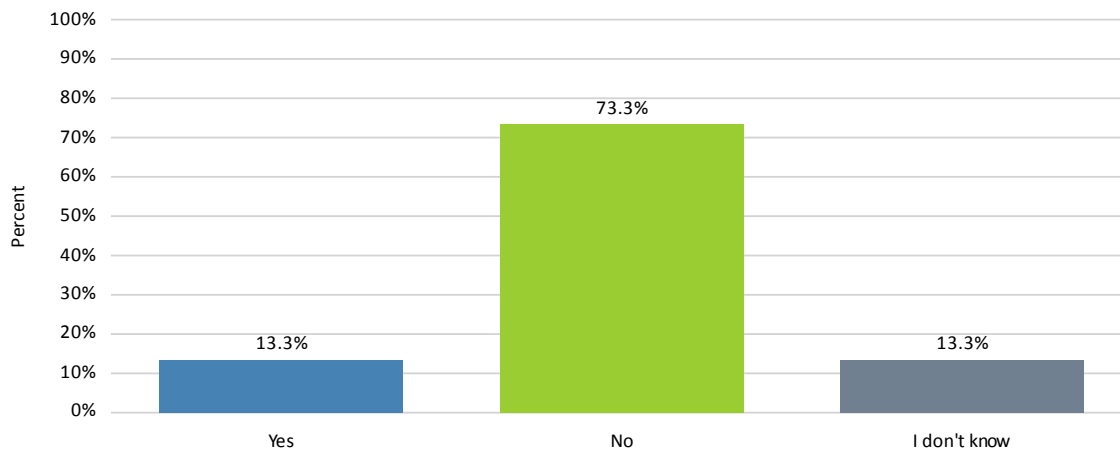
youtube

youtube, blogs, vine

digital tv, youtube

YouTube

18. Do you think more competition between online news sites results in you having less time to tailor your news stories for children?



Name	Percent
Yes	13.3%
No	73.3%
I don't know	13.3%
N	30

19. Why? Please elaborate:

I think a little competition would be good - if we focus on quality, and don't get tempted to be first.

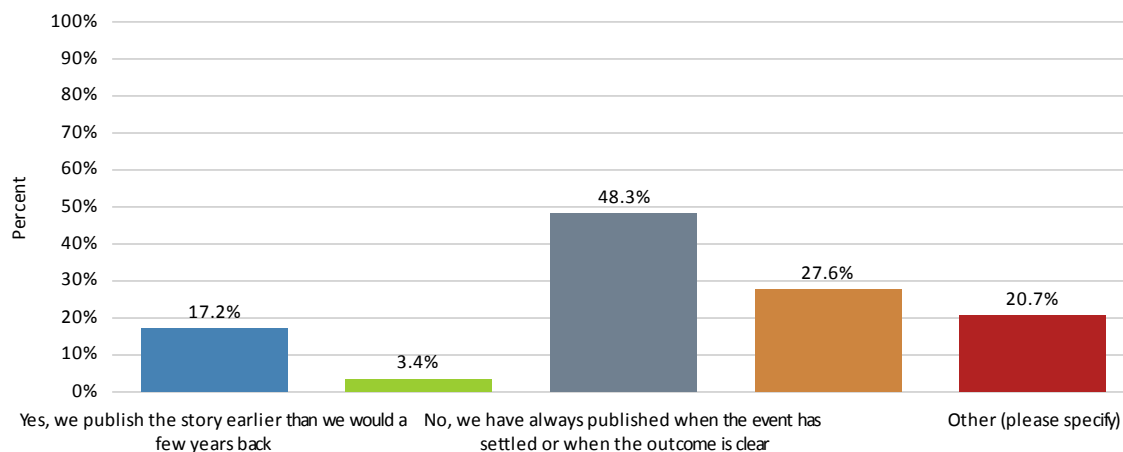
If always being first out with the latest becomes a criteria, we will not have time to really explain our story.

If something scary happens, we will not get time to see if the situation 'cools down'.

It might make us publish news that we normally wouldn't publish. Meaning we would probably publish our story before we have enough information to dampen fear.

The line between children and adult news can get more blurry.

20. When dealing with hard or breaking news, have your priorities changed in recent years as to when you publish the story?



Name	Percent
Yes, we publish the story earlier than we would a few years back	17.2%
Yes, we wait longer than before to publish a story	3.4%
No, we have always published when the event has settled or when the outcome is clear	48.3%
No, we have always waited a day or two to be able to explain the story thoroughly	27.6%
Other (please specify)	20.7%
N	29

I have only been here a month

We publish the story on the same time as a few years ago.

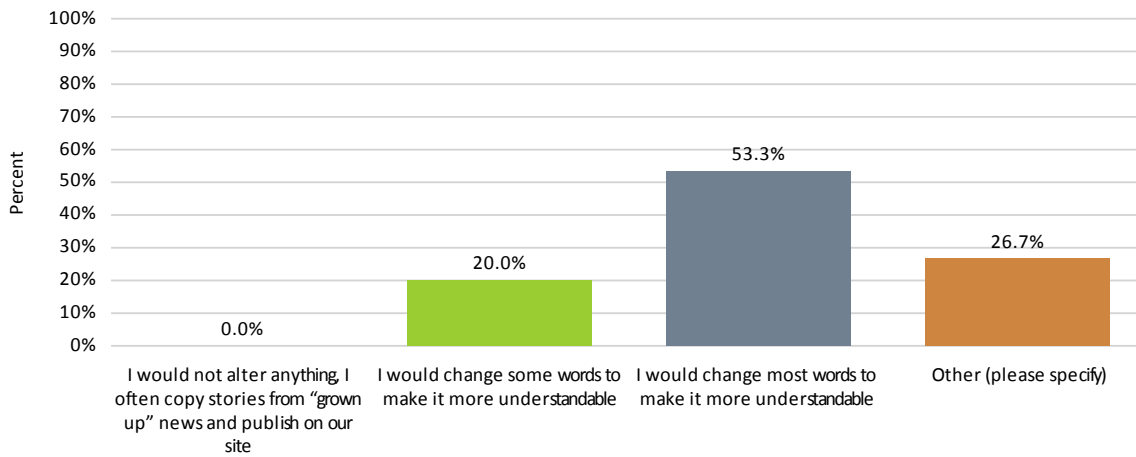
It depends on the circumstances

We publish the story when we are certain that it has to be published. Nevertheless we always try to explain it, offer comfort, we add contacts where children can call/write if they are frightened by the situation. We also differ from situations happening close to Slovenia or in Slovenia or far away. We also publish it earlier if similar event has happened in the past and we can explain it with already existing material (ex. Earthquake, floods ...)

I haven't worked here long enough to tell. But; even though we often still wait a day or two, I think we can be more tempted to publish earlier than before.

i dont know

21. How would you alter a news story from traditional news to fit younger readers? (Please select only one)



Name	Percent
I would not alter anything, I often copy stories from "grown up" news and publish on our site	0.0%
I would change some words to make it more understandable	20.0%
I would change most words to make it more understandable	53.3%
Other (please specify)	26.7%
N	30

We rewrite completely to make it understandable

think about a new storyline for kids - focus on other information especially for kids

Change words and if necessary highlight on younger audience aspects

We change also the structure, take example to tell a story more relevant for kids

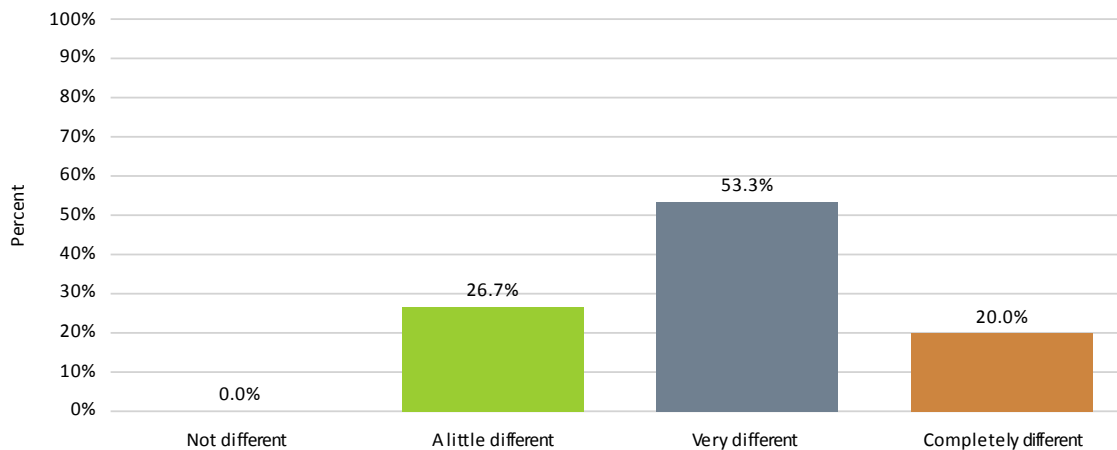
I would change most words to make it more understandable and most of the times more entertaining.

I would redo the story fit for children, with the right words and images

Completely rewrite in appropriate style

I would change words, but I would also shorten it.

22. How different should a news story for children be written or produced, compared to traditional (grown up) news? (Please select only one)



Name	Percent
Not different	0.0%
A little different	26.7%
Very different	53.3%
Completely different	20.0%
N	30

23. If you have any other comments to this survey, please feel free to write them here:

I think it will be harder to make news for children online in a small news room when children want more videos. It is no problem making the ordinary nes with text, but seeing that children want more explaining videos, this would actually require even more people working online.

I lolk forward to seeing the result :)

We have a dedicated web editor daily for our content online, but we have also trained all our staff to be able to publish online themself. Our reportres are all responsible for putting their stories online, and they often also do more than that online for our different topics - both on our website and in social media etc. Our aim is to free our web editors from beeing administrators of others material so they can focus more on producing qualitativ content online.

Kids news program must be very adaptable, we must have a look at the web forms, discuss, exchange with kids to know more about their interest...

