

# Young Chileans Evaluate the News in order to decide how to Vote in 2022

## Jovens Chilenos Avaliam as Notícias para Decidir como Votar em 2022

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### Abstract

Based on the call for the mandatory vote of young Chileans (+18) to approve or reject the draft of a new constitution for Chile in 2022, this research explored how they informed themselves about this political process and what was their assessment of the news to make their electoral decision. This context constitutes a unique scenario to contribute to the body of knowledge about the relationship between the consumption of news by young people and their involvement in political life, according to the opportunities that news offers to build their opinion. An ad-hoc quantitative survey was designed, applied online in 2023, to which 183 participants between 18 and 24 years old, mostly higher education students, responded. Young people consider it very important to vote in an informed manner, they are interested in current affairs, they value the professional work of journalists and they searched for news about the content of the constitutional text. However, for more than half of them, the news did not respond to their interests, despite the fact that this is for them one of the characteristics of quality news.

### Keywords

news consumption, young people, informed vote, political current affairs, news interests

## Resumo

Com base na convocação do voto obrigatório dos jovens chilenos (+18) para aprovar ou rejeitar o projeto de uma nova Constituição em 2022, esta pesquisa explorou como eles se informaram sobre esse processo político e qual foi sua avaliação das notícias para tomar a sua decisão eleitoral. Este contexto constitui um cenário único para contribuir para o corpo de conhecimento sobre a relação que pode ser estabelecida entre o consumo de notícias pelos jovens e o seu envolvimento na vida política de acordo com as oportunidades que as notícias oferecem para construir livremente a sua opinião. Foi concebido um inquérito quantitativo ad-hoc, aplicado online em 2023, ao qual responderam 183 participantes com idades entre os 18 e os 24 anos, na sua maioria estudantes do ensino superior. Os jovens consideram muito importante votar de forma informada, interessam-se por assuntos da atualidade, valorizam o trabalho profissional dos jornalistas e procuraram notícias sobre o conteúdo do texto constitucional. No entanto, para mais de metade deles, as notícias não respondiam aos seus interesses, apesar de esta ser para eles uma das características das notícias de qualidade.

## Palavras-chave

consumo de notícias, jovens, voto informado, atualidade política, interesses noticiosos

## Introduction

### The informative context in a constitutional process with compulsory voting in Chile

In September 2022 in Chile, the draft of a new political constitution for the country was put to a plebiscite, through a mandatory vote for those over 18 years of age, which had to be approved or rejected. This proposal was drafted by a constitutional convention elected by the citizenry (78 men and 78 women), following a transversal political agreement for social peace after the social outbreak of 2019, which determined the beginning of a constituent process. This agreement, interpreted that one way to overcome the outbreak, was to modify the current constitution, which despite its reforms had been imposed during the military dictatorship (1973-1990), without citizen participation. In the September 2022 plebiscite, therefore, young people over the age of 18 must participate. This led us to wonder about how they were informed about the content of that constitutional proposal and how the news contributed to their forming an opinion about it.

In a context of misinformation, aggravated by the infodemic triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic, young people are at greater risk of accessing inaccurate, misinforming or false content and news, especially when they overestimate their ability to detect misinformation, as shown by the findings of the study by Palau-Sampio et al. (2022) in the case of 300 journalism students surveyed in Argentina, Chile and Spain. On the other hand, the informative discourse on children and adolescents in Chile during confinement shows a news agenda concentrated on four main topics: abuse against them (28.4%), children's rights (24.8%), lawbreakers (22%) and participation

in demonstrations (14.7%). Thirty-six percent of the news items present stereotypes and few news items give a voice to children and adolescents (Condeza Dall'Orso et al., 2022). To a certain extent this representation in the news of children and adolescents in Chile is close to the first wave of studies on the political socialization of the new generations, "focused on early precursors of political attitudes and treated children as rather passive participants in the process" (Flanagan & Sherrod, 2010, p.447). According to the previous authors, in the last decades the importance of the socio-historical contexts in which children grow up has been emphasized.

In fact, the pandemic brought with it a paradoxical situation in terms of the recurrence of young people deciding to get information through traditional media again, as a way of counteracting disinformation, especially from television (Casero-Ripolles, 2020). This resurgence of traditional media, according to the author, at least for the Spanish case, where the study was conducted, "has reduced, in part, the existing inequalities regarding news consumption among citizens. This generates potential benefits for democracy in terms of equality and accessibility in relation to public affairs" (Casero-Ripolles, 2020, p.1).

Regarding the electoral participation of young people in Chile, Contreras-Aguirre and Morales-Quiroga (2014) studied how the voluntary vote produced a reduction in their participation to historical levels for the 2013 presidential election, introducing by then an age bias and a class bias in the vote in favor of the members of the more affluent, who go more to the polls. However, according to the Chilean Electoral Service, SERVEL (SERVEL, 2020) and always in the context of voluntary voting (unlike the plebiscite for the proposed draft Constitution of September 4, 2022 of mandatory voting), the national plebiscite of October 2020 was the largest vote in the history of Chile, surpassing even the 1988 plebiscite to end the dictatorship and re-establish free elections. People aged between 18 and 29 years old were the ones who most attended to vote for Approval or Rejection in that plebiscite in which the citizens agreed to initiate the process of constitutional change, the draft of which they would vote on two years later: 20-24 years old (57% attendance); 18-19 years old (56.2%) and 25-29 years old (55.9) (SERVEL, 2021).

In this context, the research team considered it essential to study the information trajectories of young people between 18 and 24 years of age, whether they considered it important to learn about current affairs in order to form their opinions, whether they sought news about this process of deliberation and political decision making, and how they assessed the usefulness of these news items in relation to their information interests. It is relevant to note that in September 2022, the draft of the new constitution was rejected by 61.86% of voters (SERVEL, 2022), a result that for many constituted a paradox of one of the most relevant political events of the last decades (Mascareño et al., 2023).

## **Literature Review**

In recent years, interest in researching young people's news consumption practices has focused mainly on the digital space. While some authors study their motivations for the consumption or non-consumption of news in different platforms

(Condeza et al., 2014; Geers, 2020; Huang, 2009), other studies approach how youth interact with online news, considering new challenges as seeking, sharing and creating information in the digital environment (Cortesi & Gassler, 2015; Costera Meijer & Groot Kormelink, 2015; Moreno Becerra et al., 2016; Sihombing, 2017) and what is news for them in social networks (Swart & Broersma, 2022). Regarding the consumption of news and participation, for Brites (2014) information is key to build civic participation. The relationship between news use and political participation reveals that youth news avoiders can have lower levels of participation (Edgeldry et al., 2018). Previously, Choi (2016) found that “news posting contributes to greater participation in politics by positively mediating the relationship between the use of SNSs and participatory activities. In contrast, news reading and endorsing were not significantly associated with political participation” (p. 436). According to Battochio et al. (2023), digital media is invaluable for engaging with public life, and news consumption, creation and interaction in digital media can enable new forms of engagement that pushes political participation. Currently, new challenges related to news consumption are added in the case of emerging generations, such as misinformation and fake news (Dhiman, 2023; Mc Dougall et al., 2019). “The digital media environment changes the way citizens receive political information, also during an election campaign. Particularly first-time voters increasingly use social media platforms as news sources” (Ohme et al., 2022, p. 3243).

Precisely the advance of digitization means that the consumption of news by young people is immersed in a process of great mutations, in detriment of traditional media, towards social networks and unconventional forms of news (Geers, 2020). The phenomenon of disconnection of young people from the “classic scenarios” of journalistic information (Soengas-Pérez et al., 2019, p.1056), i.e. with the journalistic offer of radio, television and the press has been occurring for decades. Huang (2009) underlines the need to understand “the missing links in the research of youth’s news non-consumption in the digital era” (p. 106). As stated by Fernández et al., (2018, citing Kim et al., 2013), in the context of digital convergence, news engagement has transitioned to the growing phenomenon of incidental news consumption, as “it is possible to learn about breaking news, politics, sports, elections, entertainment and all kinds of content while scrolling through social networks or surfing the web for other purposes, which do not respond to the search for information” (p. 309). Such incidental consumption of news is one of the most common practices among young people today, as a strategy -sometimes unconscious- to stay informed about various topics (Boczkowski et al., 2017). This new way of accessing news content is part of a global phenomenon of growing connectivity, characterized by the high penetration of mobile telephony, in which social media platforms are the meeting point for millions of users around the world.

The pervasive use of social media among young people results in them encountering news even without actively seeking it. Ohme et al. (2022) highlight that the surge in access via mobile devices (Van Damme et al., 2020), combined with unintentional exposure to news on platforms like social media (Kahne and Bowyer, 2018) and chat groups (Vermeer et al. 2020), has created a scenario where most young individuals receive news when “they find them”.

Following on this “news-find me” perception, Gil de Zuñiga et al. (2020) conducted a study in 10 countries, revealing that younger people are more likely than older

individuals to believe that news will find them. This “news find me perception” aligns with Thorson’s (2020) suggestion that total news avoidance is increasingly unlikely (Edgerly et al., 2018; Toff and Nielsen 2018) as we may be entering an era where the type and amount of news young people attract are shaped by their personal profiles, or personal algorithms (Swart, 2021).

Even further, Swart and Broersma (2022) established that understanding how young people assess the reliability of news should consider their actual practices and experiences because they employ pragmatic shortcuts to approximate the reliability of news. Such shortcuts are identified on nine tactics, which include prior knowledge, cross-referencing, endorsement by others, familiarity of the news source, image of the news source, perceived risks for the news source, institutional character of the news source, presentation of news (design, tonality, format), and intuition. Many of these distinguished tactics depend on tacit knowledge and more affective and intuitive considerations. Despite the use of all these tactics, this study participants remark that full trust is considered impossible.

In this context and considering the historical role those traditional media professionals have played in giving visibility to political information issues, “the political sphere has had to rethink its communication strategies to adapt them to a generation that barely consumes them, totally focused on the Internet and social networks” (Gómez de Travesedo Rojas & Gil Ramírez, 2020, p. 62). Brites (2014) takes up previous research on the correlation between access to journalistic information and greater civic literacy (i.e., citizens’ knowledge and ability to make sense of their political world, as stated by Milner, 2002). Brites (2014) also reviews literature that associates the relevance of adolescents being interested in what is happening in their environment and being informed with greater civic and political participation, for which it is necessary to consider the media ecosystem and its dynamics of constant change and dispersion of possibilities of access to information, not always to that produced by journalistic information professionals. As Peters et al. (2022) point out, “questions around youth, news and their affective dispositions towards its consumption are tied up with issues of life stage, social stratification, cultural orientations, and perceptions of citizenship, which are embodied and experienced in a dynamic media ecology” (p. 66). To the technological change that explains other ways that young people have to access and consume news, Pastor Ruiz et al. (2019) suggest that parental guidance to use the media occurs at the beginning of adolescence and then tends to be diluted.

In this context, young people’s changing news consumption habits present significant challenges. Ohme (2019) highlights that younger generations’ news consumption habits sharply contrast with those of older generations, who rely on traditional news sources. This shift impacts young people’s political engagement, leading to behaviors and attitudes markedly different from their parents.

Nevertheless, Boulianne and Theocharis (2020) found a positive correlation between digital media use among youth and their engagement in civic and political life, considering that young people’s lives are being shaped by their intensive use of new digital technologies.

According to their findings, “digital media have a generally positive role to play in civic life, although much depends on how young people use digital tools” (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020, p. 123).

The aim of this study was to examine the information trajectories of young people aged 18 to 24, focusing on their engagement with current affairs, their efforts to seek out news, and their evaluation of the usefulness of these news items in relation to their informational interests. All of the above in the context of the mandatory vote they had to cast to accept or reject the draft of the new constitution, a referendum that took place throughout Chile on September 4, 2022.

## **News consumption by youth in Chile**

Although the social outburst had the effect of increasing the percentage of television sets turned on by young people, according to the National television council (Consejo Nacional de Televisión de Chile, 2019), the pandemic generated an increase in television viewing during news hours, increased its audience and adolescents and young people also increased their sources of information on open television, despite the drop in the last decade in terms of access to open television by children (51.3% drop) and adolescents (57%). It should be noted that access to segmented television and other digital communication channels generates new gaps in these audiences (Consejo Nacional de Televisión, CNTV, 2022).

Likewise, when studying the interests and information consumption of adolescents in Chile's media ecosystem based on a representative sample of 60% of the population between 13 and 17 years of age (N=2,273), Condeza et al. (2014) observed that conventional media had a minor presence in the information diet of the adolescents surveyed. At that time, Facebook was the media they used the most for information (64.9% more than one hour per day, followed by sites such as YouTube (52.9%) and, to a lesser extent, open television (31.4%). The least used media were news portals (7.3%), magazines and paper newspapers (4.3% and 2.9% respectively). This was the first study done in the country on the consumption of news by adolescents and was financed by the Pluralism Studies Fund of the Chilean Science Agency (Condeza et al., 2013). Moreno-Becerra et al. (2016) explored in in-depth interviews with a group of twenty young Chileans from Concepción (south of Chile) how they "daily keep in touch and share content in a continuous process of updating their social media profiles and interactions with other physically close and distant people, while moving through different spaces and places in their daily lives" (p.716). In fact, Lazcano et al (2023) studied the media competencies and information consumption of 79 students aged 15-17 from subsidized and municipal schools in different Chilean cities. The study found that participants critically viewed traditional media and trusted social media algorithms, particularly Instagram, for information.

## **Methodology**

To achieve the objectives, we considered the young audience with voting rights, i.e. between 18 and 24 years of age as active media users, who are informed about current affairs in a context of mobile communication and with the main use of social networks. For this reason, it was decided to study the participants informing themselves about

their daily life and particular characteristics (Gajardo & Moreno, 2020). The proposed methodology approached this object of study through a mixed approach in two stages. In the first, quantitative stage, an ad-hoc survey was designed to identify the informational and media trajectories, the habits of daily news consumption in the context of the constitutional process, the valuation of the associated information, the instances of conversation about the process, as well as the attitudes towards the constitutional process and other instances of participation. This instrument has 6 sections and 45 questions:

- 1) Demographic information
- 2) Ways to get information on the constitutional process
- 3) News consumption habits, practices and motivations.
- 4) Socialization of news
- 5) Confidence in the news information and
- 6) Political participation and plebiscite.

These sections were built from a literature review specially conducted for this research, that included studies related with news consumption by the youth in the digital environment and theoretical approaches about news and civic engagement.

The survey was designed for an initial sample of 100 participants, was conducted online and was intended to profile the subjects of the study in order to invite them to participate, later on, in focus groups according to their voting preference. The latter, conceived as spaces for in-depth dialogue, would be used to explore in detail the perceptions, opinions and experiences of young people regarding their information trajectories in the context of the constitutional process. Prior to its application, the survey was piloted. For the second stage, we planned to conduct six focus groups in the Metropolitan (capital of Chile, Santiago) and Biobío (southern Chile) regions, covering both urban and rural areas and ensuring the diversity of positions regarding the plebiscite. In this article we focus on the results of the survey and, specifically, on the evaluation of the news to form their opinion on the constitutional process. Initially, the idea was to approach young people between 18 and 24 years of age in a representative manner and in their daily lives in both regions, with some level of social participation in different organizations, so the youth offices of the municipalities were contacted. However, after several months of waiting, permissions were not obtained, so it was decided to contact, by snowball, higher education students (technical and university). This methodological decision certainly implies a bias in the sample, as it would be expected that participants are likely more politically engaged than the general young adult population in Chile. In the same vein, this sample is not representative of the general young adult public. However, on the other hand it covers people who in the future will have a greater possibility of being in charge of decision making, or at least possesses a higher cultural capital, due to their level of study (higher education technical career or undergraduate university career).

The research project and its design were approved by the social science ethics committee of Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile. The characteristics of the participants are as follows.

At the time of voting in the first constitutional exit plebiscite of September 2022, the 183 participants were between 18 and 24 years old. 56,3% identified themselves

as female, 42,6% as male and 1,1% as non-binary. In this sample the largest number of participants (59,6%) claimed to have voted for Approve and 35,5% for Reject (Question # 24 on the option they marked in the vote). Among the responses of other voting options are being more than 200 kilometers away, null vote or prefer not to say. When asked about the option that best represented them in the September 2022 exit plebiscite vote (Question 41), 55,7% (102) said they identified with Approve, 29% (53) with Reject, 12% (22) with None and 3,3% (6) with Null vote. Include the contextual point that the 2022 referendum was rejected, which contrasts with the majority opinion of the young survey respondents.

It should be noted that the percentages of approval (A= 59,6%) and rejection (R= 35,5%) votes of the participants in this study differ from the general results obtained in the plebiscite at the national level: rejection (R= 61,86%) and approval (A= 38,14%). We do not know - and this may also be a limit of the study - whether in the case of young people the phenomenon of the spiral of silence could be operating, in terms of not wanting to express publicly that they voted for rejection and not for approval, for example. In fact, in the second phase of this research (focus groups) it was more difficult to find participants who in the survey said they voted for rejection than for approval.

In terms of the highest level of education attained at that date, the vast majority (77,6%) were studying at university (142 people) and 10,9% (20) had completed high school. The remaining percentage (11,5%) is distributed among students who had completed high school (4,4%), technical training in progress, incomplete (2 persons - 1,1%) or complete (2 persons -1,1%) and nine persons had completed university (4,9%).

In addition, when asked about their main activity during the same period, 83% were studying, 10,4% were studying and working, 5,5% were working and two people (1,1%) were looking for work for the first time.

## **RESULTS**

### **Perception of informed voting**

With respect to how informed do you think you were about the draft of the new constitution at the time of voting? (Q15) six options were proposed: very informed, informed, moderately informed, little informed, not informed and not interested. Figure 1 shows that 79,2% of the sample considered that they were informed: 18,6% very informed, 31,1% informed and 29,5% moderately informed. As for those who consider themselves to be little informed (17,5%), uninformed (1,1%) or uninterested (2,2%), they total 20,8%. These results are relevant, as they demonstrate a high perception of informed voting and justify exploring their information trajectories (Figure 1).

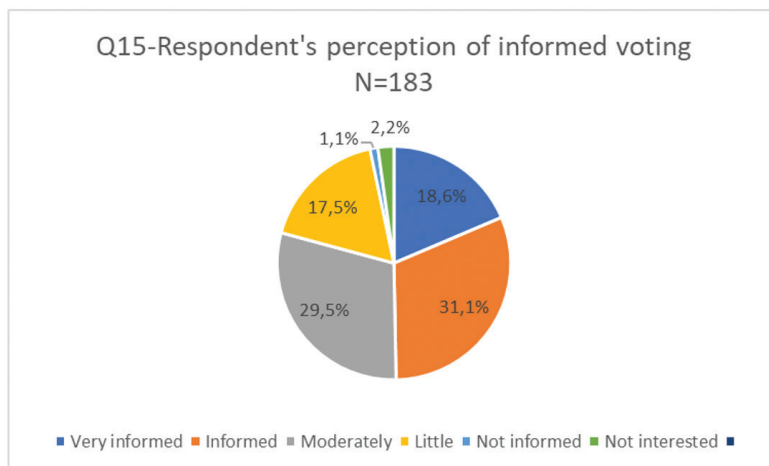
### **Respondent's perception of informed voting**

Q15. How informed do you think you were about the draft of the new constitution at the time of voting?



**Figure 1**

*Respondents' perception of informed voting (N=183, Question 15)*



Source: Own elaboration

The young people surveyed said they use the following media every day (multiple answers), from most to least frequently: memes (88%), election campaign slots (35%), TV news (31%), online printed newspapers (27%), political TV programs (12%), matinees (10%), radio news (9%), and radio programs (7%).

The use of social networks was considered in a separate question, on the basis of their use and on proposed statements, to which they had to respond with a Yes or No answer (Question 17, N=183). A high use of social networks for information is confirmed (91%), including the social networks of traditional media (80% Yes). However, they claim to be less active in commenting on information (59% No) and generating content (80% No), although 61% claim to forward information.

### Access to information on the constitutional draft

Regarding access to information on the content of the draft of the new constitution for which they had to vote Approve or Reject, 76% of respondents claim to have read a part of it. Few claims to generate information about the content of the draft (only 19% claim to do so) or comment on some information in social networks (37% Yes), although 90% of the responses indicate that they were informed about the draft in social networks. It stands out that young people claim to have been informed through traditional media news in 74% of the cases and that they are active when verifying the veracity of the information (76%).

54% of respondents agree (A) or strongly agree (SA) that the information provided by journalists was useful. Professionals also have the lowest level of disagreement (D and S/D) compared to other social actors who were consulted for information.

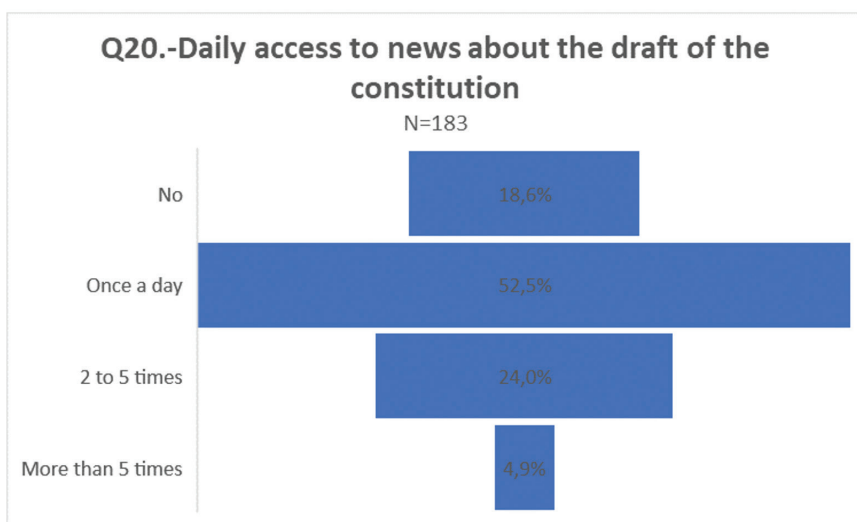
## Access to news about the new constitution to be voted

As for the frequency of access to news about the new constitution (Q 20), 52,5% of respondents said they accessed it once a day and 24% between 2 and 5 times and 18,6% claim not to have been informed (Figure 2).

### Q20. Thinking about the news about the constituent process, how often were you informed?

**Figure 2**

*Frequency of access to news about the draft and the constitutional process 2022 (Q.20, N=183)*



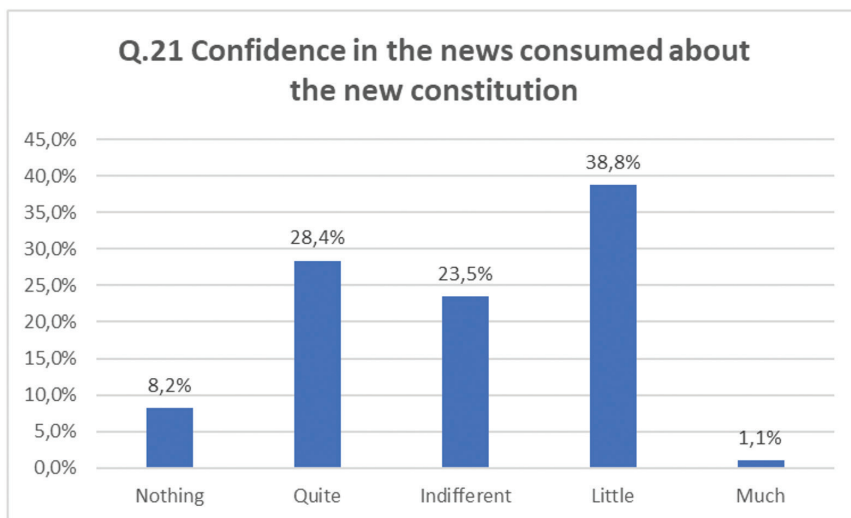
Source: Own elaboration

## Trust in the news they consumed

However, when asked how much they trusted the information they accessed (see Figure 3, question 21, How much did you trust the news you accessed about the new constitution?), 47% trusted little (38,8%) or not at all (8,2%), compared to 29,5% who trusted a lot (1,1%) and quite a lot (28,4%). The 23,5% who mark the preference Indifferent could possibly be related to those who responded that they were not informed in the previous question (18,6% did not have access to information in Q20).

**Figure 3**

*Confidence in the news about the draft and constitutional process 2022 (Q.21, N=183)*



Source: Own elaboration

### Importance of informed voting

Almost 100% of respondents consider that informed voting matters (97%) and 83% claim to have voted informed. It is striking that when they searched for specific news about the draft constitutional process, in 54% of the cases what they found did not respond to their interests. This shows that young people constitute a group that can be approached in a more relevant way by the information industry and that the latter may not be aware of their information interests, which also has an impact on lower levels of pluralism in the national information system. On the other hand, for the participants, those close to them are important to form their opinion (53%), although the remaining 47% are indifferent (23%) or disagree or strongly disagree (24%). A high percentage (70%) are concerned about distinguishing the veracity of the information and are conscious of not circulating false news without verifying its sources (19% did so) or even knowing it was false (10% and 4% did so respectively), in a context in which 64% say they agree and strongly agree that false news circulated in their close environment. In 58% of the cases, it is stated that once the news received was verified, it was commented on and forwarded. It is also observed that in close circles disagreements were generated due to different opinions about voting Approve or Reject (49% marked Strongly Agree or Agree).

## Modes of access to news in traditional media

Taking into consideration that traditional media have also migrated to different platforms and that most of them disseminate news through their own and official social networks, participants were asked about the modalities they use most frequently to get information (always, frequently, occasionally, rarely and never). Young people are informing themselves more through the social networks of traditional media than through their non-digital media. The social networks of broadcast TV channels are far ahead in this area, as 43,7% of respondents always access news through this channel, followed by the social networks of newspapers (22,4%) and radio social networks (19,1%). If we add always and frequently, we reach 71,6% for TV social networks, 41,5% for newspaper social networks and 38,2% for radio social networks. Search engines are little used for these purposes.

## Motivations for news consumption

Respondents were presented with different motivations for consuming news and were asked to rank them in order of the importance they attached to each. Below we rank the motivations in order of importance, according to the preferences indicated by the respondents to the survey.

1. Knowing what is happening in the country and in the world: 54,6%
2. Informed decision making: 40,4%
3. Having an opinion on important issues: 39,8% and Inform Others: 39,8%
4. Understanding what might affect my family and friends: 39,3%
5. To be informed as a citizen's duty: 36,6%:
6. It is a habit in my family: 18%

According to preferences, "Knowing what is happening in the country and the world" (54,6%) and "Making informed decisions" (40,4%) are the most important, followed by "Having information about important issues" and "informing others" (39,8% each of them) and "Understanding what could affect my family and friends" (39,3%).

## News Quality

Finally, we asked about the level of agreement and disagreement with the news that young people consider to be of quality (See Table 1). Degrees of agreement (A) and strongly agree (SA) were grouped together, as well as degrees of disagreement (D) and strongly disagree (SD). The option neither agree nor disagree is abbreviated in the table as NA/ND.

**Table 1***What characterizes a quality news item (N=183)-Question 40*

	A/SA	NA/ND	D/SD
Surveillance of power, monitoring and scrutiny of public persons and companies	76,5%	17,5%	6,0%
They show a balanced tone, describe events in an unbiased manner and without exaggeration.	72,1%	18%	9,8%
They cite reliable and expert sources to support the information presented.	82,5%	10,9%	6,6%
Use clear and accessible language so that they can easily understand the information.	83,1%	12,6%	4,4%
They are attractively presented, easy to use and share.	70,5%	23,5%	6,0%
They are relevant to my interests and needs, addressing issues that are important to me and my community.	76%	18%	6,0%
They challenge me with arguments and expose me to perspectives different from my own.	67,8%	25,7%	6,6%
They provide me with new perspectives and enrich my understanding.	81,4%	12,6%	6,0%
They foster empathy and make me feel connected to others.	64,5%	25,1%	10,4%
They inspire me and make me question my views.	70,5%	20,8 %	8,7%
They make me feel represented	53,6%	30,6%	15,8%
They make me feel part of a community or group	44,8%	36,6%	18,6%
They have audiovisual support	71,6%	21,3%	7,1%

Source: Own elaboration

All responses show higher percentages in “strongly agree” and “agree”, ranging from 44,8% (feeling part of a community or group) to 83,1% (clear and accessible language to understand). High importance is given to the reliability of the sources (82,5%), as well as to the fact that they provide new perspectives and enrich understanding (81,4%). It is interesting to note that, in terms of format, young people attribute quality to a news item according to whether it is attractive, easy to use and share (70,5%) and has audiovisual support (71,6%).

## Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine the information trajectories of young people aged 18 to 24, focusing on their engagement with current affairs, their efforts to seek out news, and their evaluation of the usefulness of these news items in relation to their informational interests in the context of the Chilean 2022 plebiscite to approve or reject the draft of the new constitution.

The findings indicate that most participants considered themselves well-informed about the draft of the new constitution. This high level of perceived informedness underscores the importance these young adults place on being knowledgeable

about current political events. This aligns with previous studies which suggest that media are particularly significant for younger voters. Having recently entered the political system, these individuals are often more uncertain about their voting choices in their first elections compared to older generations (Ha et al., 2013; Ohme, de Vreese, & Albæk, 2018), and there is a positive correlation between digital media use among youth and their engagement in civic and political life (Boulianne & Theocharis, 2020).

Interestingly, when it came to accessing information about the draft constitution, most participants had read part of the draft and relied on social media for updates. Although traditional media also contributed, the trust in the information accessed varied widely among respondents. While some expressed minimal or no trust, others had considerable confidence in the information they received. This mixed trust in information about the draft constitution among young people can be attributed to the pervasive influence of social media, selective exposure to information that aligns with personal beliefs (Aharoni et al., 2021), perceptions of media bias and credibility (van der Meer & Hameleers, 2020), and the prevalence of misinformation (Pennycook et al., 2021). All of this is consistent with Swart and Broersma (2022) findings that highlight the need to consider young people's actual practices and experiences to understand the ways they assess the reliability of news content and sources, especially because their use of pragmatic tactics, that mainly depend on tacit knowledge and more affective and intuitive considerations, to assess the reliability of news content and sources.

Regarding the characteristics of quality news, participants prioritized clear and accessible language, the citation of reliable and expert sources, and the provision of new perspectives. This aligns with the findings of Costera Meijer & Groot Kormelink (2020) and Schrøder (2019), who emphasize the importance of presenting diverse perspectives to enhance the relevance and depth of news content. Additionally, the format of news also mattered, with attractiveness, ease of use, sharing, and audio-visual support being valued attributes. These preferences are supported by studies from Groot Kormelink and Costera Meijer (2020), which highlight the significance of engaging, visually appealing, and user-friendly news formats in attracting and retaining younger audiences, as well as getting their trust (Swart & Broersma, 2022). These findings suggest a broader understanding of what constitutes quality news, where engagement plays a crucial role (Gajardo & Costera Meijer, 2023). Young news users not only seek reliable and diverse information but also value the overall user experience. This includes how easily they can access, interact with, and share news content.

## Conclusions

The findings regarding the appreciation of professional news by participants, as well as a demand for news of their interest is an opportunity for journalists to establish a news agenda on current and political events that is closer to young people, while also providing clues to answer Huang's (2009) question about the need to investigate the link on the "non-consumption" of news by the new generations. The above seems to us a relevant phenomenon to explore in greater depth. This will allow the media and their professional teams to have new knowledge about the current news consumption practices of this age group to rethink the style, formats or genres of news storytelling that

are more appropriate for those who currently consume news, as well as the opportunity to make a critical assessment of the ways in which the architecture of the platforms enables differentiated access to news content and the multiplicity of available media.

The need for information of people in electoral processes vindicates the professional role of journalists, even more so in a context of disinformation and polarization that can be triggered through social networks or unethical journalistic practices (think of dubious practices, such as clickbait, for example). The guiding role of journalism in this type of process and its opinion-forming impact among young people and citizens is essential to ensure processes of expression of opinion with the greatest possible degrees of freedom. More diverse and plural news coverage could incorporate the interests of young people to generate content on current affairs and ongoing social and political processes that are useful for their decision-making.

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## Conflict of interest | Conflito de interesses

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