

Listening to what trust in news means to users: qualitative evidence from four countries | Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism

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How do people view media they come across in everyday life, and what can that tell us about why they do (and do not) trust the news they encounter? In early 2021, the Reuters Institute held a series of focus group discussions and interviews with cross-sections of people on four continents to learn more about the way people think about these matters. They told us about what they liked, what they disliked, and, most importantly, what they found trustworthy and untrustworthy about news, and why.

This report summarises several of the insights we took away from these conversations. What we learnt speaks directly to previous research on trust in news – which we detail in a previous report (Toff et al. 2020) – but in other ways these discussions raise some uncomfortable questions about the nature of trust in contemporary digital media environments. In short, we find that trust often revolves around ill-defined impressions of brand identities and is rarely rooted in details concerning news organisations' reporting practices or editorial standards – qualities that journalists often emphasise about their work.

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