

"I Read It Online Somewhere" - characteristics of media consumption habits of generations over 50 in Hungary

Introduction

The digital world and the online space within it are an increasingly inescapable part of everyone's life. This trend seems to be growing unstoppably with new phenomena such as the rise of artificial intelligence.¹ In addition to socialising and entertainment, public administration, banking and health care services are now increasingly available online, while changes in information consumption habits have made the digital space almost an inevitable part of everyday life. The presence of older generations in the digital space and on the growing number of online platforms has therefore become a reality in our daily lives.

The main focus of this publication was to explore the literature and to look at primary and secondary sources. We focused on media consumption patterns in order to investigate how news, fake news, credible and less reliable information circulating in the online space reach older people in Hungary and how this generation perceives them. An important aspect was to determine, first and foremost, who we can consider to be primarily members of the older generations today and what socio-demographic variables can be used to characterise their groups. In the present study, we considered the Covid pandemic of 2020-2021 as a gamechanger event, because it had a significant impact on online media consumption and led to an unprecedented spread of fake news. We present a mapping of media market and news consumption reports, studies and statistics published in the years since then, broken down by year for a more credible and in-depth understanding.

¹ Eurostat: Individuals using the internet for participating in social networks (2024)
https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/TIN00127/default/table?lang=en&-%20category=isoc.isoc_i.isoc_iiu (Accessed 4 February 2025)

Who is considered elderly in Hungary today?

The answer to this question may be partly based on objective criteria (the current retirement age, the legal age limits for the various "old-age" benefits, etc.), but it may also have subjective aspects that differ from one individual to another. In order to answer this question, we have therefore drawn on references from the literature.

In their study², Ágnes Hofmeister Tóth and Ágnes Neulinger investigated opinions, beliefs and associations about older people, and also the public's perception of their appearance in television advertisements. Their research led them to conclude that the majority of the Hungarian population define the beginning of old age 60, 65 or 70 years of age, while less than 5% of respondents believe that it starts at 80 years of age. In the summary of their study, they also cite similar research by foreign experts, including a reference to a joint publication by Hannah J. Swift and Ben Steeden in 2020³. Based on research from the European Social Survey and IPSOS, the authors note that the onset of old age in Europe varies from country to country, for example in Hungary it changed from 61 in 2008/2009 to 65 in 2018. It can be seen that the onset of 'old' age is shifting to a higher and higher age. Hofmeister Tóth and Neulinger's results show similar characteristics: while young respondents think old age starts at 60.7, older respondents think it starts at 64.5.

How can we group the older generations?

Ádám Guld, media researcher and communication expert, associate professor at the University of Pécs, one of the best-known Hungarian researchers on media consumption of generations, classifies the older generation into three groups based on their digital skills.⁴

1. Group: Digital immigrants

The first group, according to the researcher, is "a highly educated group of older people who have been exposed to digital tools in their working and active lives, and therefore have a relatively higher level of digital literacy. In many cases, they can use digital tools in a very functional and targeted way to facilitate their own lives and to take advantage of the conveniences offered by digital media. They do banking, shop online, use the so-called Ügyfélportál [Client Portal] and so on".

2. Group: Compulsive users

The second group of older people do not have high digital skills, but are forced to use digital platforms due to maintain family relations or other external factors. Members of this group use digital opportunities for entertainment in addition to keeping in touch with family members.

² Ágnes Hofmeister Tóth - Ágnes Neulinger: Az idősek iránti attitűd és az idős fogyasztók ábrázolása a tv reklámokban Magyarországon [Attitudes towards the elderly and the portrayal of elderly consumers in TV advertisements in Hungary]. Jel-Kép: Kommunikáció Közvélemény Média, 2 (2). pp. 65-80. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.20520/JEL-KEP.2021.2.65>

³ Hannah J Swift - Ben Steeden: Literature review: Exploring representations of old age and ageing. <https://ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-03/Exploring-representations-of-old-age.pdf> (Accessed 31 January 2025)

⁴ Attila Horváth: Felzárkózó székoraúk a nethasználatban [Older people catching up in net usage], ITBusiness, 14 September 2024. https://itbusiness.hu/technology/human_n/szekoraúk-nethasznalat/ (Accessed 13 January 2025)

Because they lack in-depth knowledge, they often encounter difficulties in using digital solutions on a daily basis and turn to others (mainly, of course, family members) for help.

3. Group: Not interested

The third group is the smallest in terms of numbers and is made up of individuals who are not interested in such opportunities and therefore digital media are out of their reach. As a result, they are deprived of many opportunities that could help them in their daily activities.

Guld also drew attention to the digital dangers for older people, which is a key issue in terms of our project. The expert believes that older people tend to believe that what they read or see in the media is always true, as their generation had little or fewer sources of information. As a consequence, they can easily fall victim to manipulated and misleading information, especially in the digital world where they can be targeted by various criminal activities. According to Guld, the education targeting this generation is not yet sufficient and much more effort is needed to manage digital risks and develop critical thinking.

Internet vulnerability of the 50+ generation⁵

Between 23 and 31 January 2024, a quota sample of 800 Hungarian adults aged 50-79 years, representative of the Hungarian population by sex, age, place of residence and education, was taken according to the latest data available at the time from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office. Through a Computer Assisted Web Interview (CAWI), researchers sought answers to questions such as what devices the Hungarian population aged 50-79 use to go online, what their typical online activities are, what fears they have or feel safe in the online space, what digital protection mechanisms they have heard of and which ones they use, if any. The key findings of the joint research by the National Media and Infocommunications Authority (NMHH) and the Data-Driven Marketing Association of Hungary (DIMSZ) are as follow.

97% of Hungarian internet users aged 50-79 use the internet on a daily basis, on average about 2 hours a day, but not continuously. 82% of respondents have been using the internet for at least 10 years. Their most important online activities include reading the news, emailing, using social media, chatting and "browsing". Older people spend most of their time reading the news, using social media and searching for information, while online shopping, watching films and TV are less common. Online work and professional activities are rare among the members of this age group, given their age. Smartphone use is also very high, with 74% of 50-79-year-olds using it as their primary digital device. In addition to smartphones, the desktop computer and laptop are also frequently used devices, but they do not reach 50%, while tablet usage among older people is around 20%.

89% of older people are explicitly reluctant to give their data online. A significant majority prefer to buy by mail with payment upon delivery because of security concerns and almost 80% are afraid of computer viruses. Although they consider themselves careful, almost 30% of respondents said they often click on misleading links. "According to the research, the majority of fraudulent online attacks are known to them, including malicious newsletters, fake product

⁵ Az idősebb népesség online szokásai és a digitalizáció veszélyei. Online kérdőíves kutatás eredményei, 2024. február [Older people's online habits and the dangers of digitalisation. Results of online survey, February 2024]. https://dimesz.hu/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/DIMSZ_NMHH_IDOSEK_SURVEY_RIPORT.pdf (Accessed 14 January 2025)

sales and fake sweepstakes, with a relatively high proportion of victims, above 10%. Among the elderly, the most common victim is the malicious link received via texting."⁶

Half of those surveyed consider the internet to be more dangerous than the offline world, and a similar proportion are concerned about online fraud. "Despite their fears, only 33% use ad blockers and only 21% use encrypted channels. The top fear of respondents (50% mentioning it) is data theft and phishing, but many also mentioned computer viruses (42%) and 'scams and scams' (37%)."⁷

Respondents are most afraid of the following online threats:

- virus (42%)
- data theft (26%)
- phishing (24%)
- fraud (21%)
- scam (16%)
- hacking (11%)
- digital observation (10%)
- data loss (9%)
- wiretapping (9%)
- action against bank account (6%)
- data leakage (5%)
- espionage (4%)
- strangers accessing the machine (4%)
- use of personal data (3%)
- fake news (3%)

Of particular note for our topic is the low rate of mention of fake news among the older generation of internet threats, with even the not-so-realistic spying receiving a higher rate of mention in the sample.

In this research, older people were classified into four distinct groups according to their vulnerability to the internet^{8,9} as follows:

1. group: "vulnerable victim type"

- 37% of the sample surveyed
- especially timid, defenceless older people
- use internet less than average
- click more often on misleading content

⁶ NMHH: Az egyedül élő idősebbek különösen kiszolgáltatottak az online veszélyekkel szemben, 2024. március 27. [NMHH: Older people living alone are particularly vulnerable to online threats, 27 March 2024]. https://nmhh.hu/cikk/246055/Az_egyedul_elo_idosebbek_kulonosen_kiszolgáltatottak_az_online_veszelyekkel_szemben (Accessed 15 January 2025)

⁷ ibid.

⁸ Fn. 5.

⁹ NMHH: Médiapiaci Jelentés 2024 [NMHH: Media Market Report 2024]. ISSN 2939-8088.

https://nmhh.hu/dokumentum/249788/Mediapiaci_Jelentes_2024_akadalymentes.pdf (Accessed 16 January 2025)

- are more afraid than average of becoming a victim of online fraud, viruses or hacking, yet do not take any meaningful action to protect themselves
- those with lower status
- typically live in rural areas, alone
- 64-79 years old

2. Group: "uninformed gullible"

- 10% of the sample surveyed
- don't check content, click recklessly, give their details carelessly on public platforms and don't consider the online space dangerous, fearing they may be the victim of a virus, hacking or fraud
- they do not know how to protect themselves
- rather men
- those with lower status
- typically live alone
- 64-79 years old
- internet use is recent
- lower awareness of the different forms of online fraud
- lower rates of attempted fraud

3. Group: "instinctive confident"

- 30% of the sample surveyed
- feel safe online, do not consider the online space dangerous, are not afraid of viruses and hackers, or of online scams
- typically do not click on a malicious link, they recognise the danger
- typically live in big cities, have families
- those with higher status are over-represented

4. Group: "conscious cautious"

- 23% of the sample surveyed
- careful, cautious younger people
- always check the veracity of news and content, weighing up the risks before clicking on a link
- are aware of the dangers of the online world and know how to protect themselves against them
- typically younger women aged 50-64
- typically live in the capital, have a family
- those with higher status
- use most of the secure solutions, with the use of secure passwords being prominent among them
- a higher proportion are aware of the different forms of online fraud
- higher rates of attempted fraud

Changes in media consumption habits of older generations between 2021 and 2025

In the following section, we summarise the most important findings of the literature and research reports published in the last few years on the media consumption habits of older people, their presence on online platforms and their exposure to information manipulation. Taking into account the sometimes unpredictable pace of change in the media ecosystem, especially in the digital world, this literature review is a synthesis of the papers published in the last five years, i.e. between 2021 and 2025. It is also important to stress that we have taken as a basis for this analysis reports and studies from different organisations, with different objectives and different perspectives, highlighting in each case the relevant parts of the main focus of our topic. Here we also refer back to the point made in the introduction about the unprecedented amount of pseudo-news that has become more widespread during the Covid epidemic. Moreover, the use of pseudo-news, increasingly large-scale disinformation campaigns and increasingly sophisticated techniques of information manipulation gained further momentum after the launch of Russian aggression and full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, which also falls within the period under review.

In the following chapters, we have sought to provide a compendium of important and relevant aspects of older people's exposure to content consumption, internet and digital device usage and exposure to the harms that result from these, in a readily understandable format, with the original source cited in each case, to help those interested in the topic to understand it in more depth in the future.

2021

The Republikon Institute's 2021 survey "Media consumption in Hungary - Television channels, news portals, social media" was conducted between 8 January and 4 February 2021 by Závecz Research, based on a representative sample of 5,000 adults in Hungary, by gender, age, type of residence, education, with personal interviews.¹⁰

The research revealed that Hungarian TV news programmes are particularly popular among Fidesz-KDNP (the ruling party in Hungary) voters, people over 60 and those with low educational qualifications. TV2's (a government-friendly commercial TV channel) viewership is quite high across society as a whole, "TV2 has the lowest viewership among graduates, opposition voters and the undecided [voters], and is also less popular than average among Budapest residents". RTL Klub's (one of the biggest commercial TV channels) news programmes are also most watched by older and low-educated people, and have lower ratings among graduates and undecided voters. The data suggest that older people and those with low levels of education watch more TV overall than the average Hungarian. Even among opposition voters, nearly 40% watch public TV at least once a week, a high proportion.

For this reason, it is worth noting that, given the bias of the state media and the pro-government TV2, the information manipulation potential of these channels is inherent.

¹⁰ Republikon Intézet: Médiafogyasztás Magyarországon – Televíziós csatornák, hírportálok, közösségi média [Republikon Institute: Media Consumption in Hungary – Television Channels, News Portals, Social Media] <https://republikon.hu/media/98833/republikon-mediafogyasztas-21-06-28.pdf> (Accessed 17 January 2024)

Another relevant aspect from the research data is that the higher the age, the higher the chance of getting information from television and presumably the higher the time spent watching television.

The sociodemographic characteristics of internet browsing are similar to those of TV viewing: education and size of municipality are the determining factors. People with higher education and living in larger municipalities are more likely to use internet portals, while older people are less likely to use them. Younger, higher educated people living in large cities prefer to use the internet, while older, lower educated people and those living in small towns prefer to consume television news. However, political affiliation has less influence on media consumption than social and demographic differences.

The results of this 2021 survey outline the social media consumption habits of the older generation, which have intensified in recent years. This is discussed in more detail in the following sections of the literature review.

2022

In 2022, the Hungarian Association of Electronic Broadcasters (MEME) and the National Media and Infocommunications Authority (NMHH), with the involvement of Inspira Research, undertook a research project¹¹ on the device and application usage habits of 50-75-year-olds, in the framework of which the device penetration of this age group and the extent of the digital divide were mapped. The research was representative of the 50-75 age group in terms of gender, type of municipality, region, education and economic activity, with a sample size of 2000.

In terms of device penetration, it can be said that TVs can be found in almost all households, while modern devices such as smartphones, laptops, notebooks and tablets are already widespread among the age group surveyed. Two thirds of households in the 50-75 age group have a smartphone, almost half have a laptop and the share of tablets is as high as a quarter of these households. These proportions are lower in the 60-75 age group, but the take-up of modern devices is also evident in this group. 88% of 50-75-year-olds watch TV at least weekly, while internet penetration among them is 73%, "but this varies widely by gender and age group. Among 50-59-year-olds, penetration is 94%, and is high for both men (92%) and women (95%). In the 60-75 age group, only 58% have access to the internet, and there is a significant gender gap: 77% for women but only 33% for men". The proportion of regular internet users is lower: "the proportion of those who use the internet at least weekly is 67% in the 50-75 age group, and the same trend as for internet penetration can be observed here, i.e. higher proportions of women aged 50-59 and 60-75, and significantly lower proportions of men aged 60-75." The group showing digital proficiency is 44%. Social media is also popular among older internet users, with almost all of them using it.

In addition to the undeniably important and inescapable role of television, we can therefore also see the rise of other digital tools, solutions and content among the older generations. Within the

¹¹ Inspira Visionary Research - MEME - NMHH: A „hagyományos” televíziózáson túlmutató eszközök használata az 50-75 évesek körében. [Inspira Visionary Research - MEME - NMHH: Use of devices beyond "traditional" television among 50-75-year-olds].

https://inspira.hu/wp-content/uploads/inspira_research_meme_50-75_evsek_eszkozhasznalata_2022.10.27_0-1.pdf (Accessed 18 January 2025)

50-75 age group studied in the research, the researchers have further differentiated between age groups, indicating that there is no single age group.

Ipsos conducted a survey in 2022 to explore the lifestyle, leisure activities, health, financial situation and shopping habits of consumers aged 50+. We describe the elements of the large, face-to-face, national market survey that are relevant to our topic.¹²

Two-thirds of the 50-59 age group are slightly behind but follow new innovations and new products, and half of the 60-75 age group do so. The share of those at the forefront of new innovations and digital solutions in the two age groups is 12% and 6% respectively. The Ipsos research confirms the findings described above, i.e. that the interest and use of digital solutions increases in line with the educational attainment. While the proportion of those who avoid digital solutions, innovations and novelties is 50% among those who have completed up to 8th grade in elementary education, it is only 11% among graduates.

70% of people over 50 regularly use the internet, 61% of whom use social media, mainly Facebook, on a daily basis and 51% read online news portals. Half of online news readers also watch video content and 15% comment on the news. The smartphone is now the most commonly used mobile phone among older people, although 44% of households still have a landline phone, which some parents and grandparents actively use to stay in touch with their loved ones. High quality, fast internet is available for nearly half of the age group surveyed. Smartphone internet usage is particularly popular among those under 60, and usage increases with educational attainment.

Watching TV remains the most popular leisure activity, especially among older and retired people. At the same time, some consumer groups are turning away from traditional media in favour of digital innovations and online services. While television and radio are popular with the over-60s, online video and streaming services are popular with the younger under-60s.

Not insignificant are the findings of the research on the credibility of information sources. They show that the 60-75 age group mainly believes what they see on TV, while in the 50-59 age group online news portals are gaining ground, in addition to the dominance of television. As educational attainment rises, the credibility of television declines, while that of online news portals increases exponentially. The credibility index of social media is around 6-7% for almost all socio-demographic variables, while radio scores around 10%.

Once again, we can conclude that, in addition to the prominent role of television, digital devices (smartphones, high-speed internet), digital subscription services (streaming services) and digital forms of content consumption and engagement (social media presence, online news consumption) are becoming increasingly important, while the credibility index of traditional media has entered a strong negative spiral.

¹² Ipsos: Innováció és tudás: Média és márkakommunikáció – Nem öreg, csak régebb óta fiatal [Ipsos: Innovation and knowledge: media and brand communication – Not old, just younger for a longer period] <https://www.ipsos.com/hu-hu/nem-oreg-csak-regebb-ota-fiatal> (Accessed 19 January 2025)

2023

The latest data collection of the research series of Mérték Media Monitor and Medián Public Opinion and Market Research Institute mapping media consumption patterns took place between 14 and 28 March 2023, with a national representative sample of 1200 people, interviewed by telephone. The sample reflects the composition of the voting age population by type of settlement, gender, age and education. We highlight the details of the survey data that are relevant to us.¹³

The question "If for some reason you could only follow one type of media in the future, which would you choose?" aims to explore the role of media types in your orientation. Both 50-59-year-olds and those aged 60+ mentioned commercial television first, but it is striking that the mention of public television was almost identical for the older age group (29% and 24% respectively).

The researchers note that "[...] It is hardly surprising that we found significant differences between the various demographic segments when it comes to this question. The attachment to television was especially pronounced among the elderly and those with lower educational attainment, while youths and highly educated respondents found the internet essential. [...] These results highlight the peculiar structure of the Hungarian media situation, to wit the fact that the influence of the ruling party is very pronounced in legacy media (print, radio and television), while independent news sources, which also present narratives that diverge from that proffered by the government, are most likely to be online media."

One measure of conscious media consumption is whether consumers watch, read or listen to news sources they consider to be discredited. 34% of 50-59-year-olds tend to consume news sources they believe to be often untrue, compared to 39% of those aged 60+.

Information on public affairs varies by age group along the distribution of news sources. While just under a quarter of young people, 80% of people aged 60 and over regularly get their information from television. The proportion of people in all cohorts who get their information from the internet is around 70%. The role of radio in providing information increases steadily with age, while the role of newspapers is only significant for the over-60s.

Interestingly, 24% of 50-59-year-olds click on articles and videos offered by Google, Facebook or other providers on a daily basis, while 26% of those aged 60+ click on them. 30% and 34% of respondents do so at least once a week, meaning that the role of the technology giants in informing this age group is also inescapable. However, it is also important to note that the proportion of the sample who are not informed decreases with age, with 14% of the 50-59 age group and only 8% of the over-60s not regularly or not at all informed.

The use of social media platforms is widespread. 8 out of 10 respondents aged 50-59 use some form of social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok), while 7 out of 10 respondents aged 60+ use social media.

¹³ Endre Hann - Klára Magyarai - Ágnes Urbán - Kata Horváth - Petra Szávai - Gábor Polyák: Tájékoztató szigeteken egy polarizált médiarendszerben [News Islands in a Polarized Media System]. Mérték Media Monitor, Budapest, 2023. https://mertek.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Mertek-fuzetek_29.pdf (Accessed 20 January 2025)

Over the past decade and a half, numerous research papers¹⁴ and studies¹⁵ have demonstrated the immanent role of political influence in the Hungarian media system. When members of the older generation were asked which political party or side they think has more influence in the media in Hungary today, the following results emerged: the unanimous majority of respondents (86%) believe that Hungarian governing party, Fidesz plays a dominant political role in the Hungarian media space. Therefore, it is not surprising that 72% of the 50-59 age group and 69% of those aged 60+ think that all major news sources are influenced by one political side or the other. In other words, partisan media and news production practices are accepted as a natural given in today's Hungary.

2024

Last year's National Media and Infocommunications Authority (NMHH) survey "Generations' media use in the first quarter of 2024" provided the following aspects.¹⁶

During the period analysed, radio reached an average of 5.4 million people a day, mostly baby boomers¹⁷, while younger generations listened to radio in decreasing proportions. Traditional media, including radio, are constantly trying to reach younger audiences, and it is becoming increasingly common for them to publish their programmes online as podcasts or in video format. Television is watched by an average of 6 million people a day, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to capture the attention of younger generations. Baby boomers spent the most time in front of screens, while Generation X spent significantly more time (91 minutes or 24%) watching TV on weekends than on weekdays.

There were also significant generational differences in terms of the internet usage: although baby boomers had the lowest proportion of access to the online space, they spent the most time on the platforms, particularly browsing news portals, 21 minutes on a daily basis. In contrast, Generation Z members spent only six minutes a day with this activity. Overall, the research

¹⁴ Robert Nemeth: Media Capture Monitoring Report: Hungary. Measuring compliance with the European Media Freedom Act. IPI - MJRC, Vienna, 2024. <https://ipi.media/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Hungary-Media-Capture-Monitoring-Report-Final-1.pdf> (Accessed 20 January 2025).

Kata Horváth - Gábor Polyák - Ágnes Urbán: Egy magára hagyott médiarendszer. A magyar média: ostromolva, támogatás nélkül Lány Cenzúra 2023. [A Media System Abandoned: The Hungarian media under siege and without support (Soft Censorship 2023)]. Mérték Media Monitor, Budapest, 2024. https://mertek.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Mertek_fuzetek_38.pdf (Accessed 20 January 2025)

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch: 'I Can't Do My Job as a Journalist'. The Systematic Undermining of Media Freedom in Hungary. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2024/02/13/i-cant-do-my-job-journalist/systematic-undermining-media-freedom-hungary> (Accessed 20 January 2025).

¹⁶ Anikó Domján: Megdőlt egy tévhit: nem a Z generáció lóg a legtöbben az interneten [A misconception has been disproved: it is not Generation Z that spends the most time online], index.hu, 14 August 2024. <https://index.hu/techtud/2024/08/14/hagyomanyos-media-atalakulas-nmhh-boomer-z-generacio/> (Accessed 29 January 2025); Vehir.hu: Több időt töltenek a neten az idősek, mint a fiatal felnőttek [Older people spend more time online than young adults], vehir.hu, 2024. 14 August 2024. <https://vehir.hu/cikk/75143-tobb-idot-toltenek-a-neten-az-idosek-mint-a-fiatal-felnottek> (Accessed 29 January 2025); NMHH: Generációk médiahasználatára 2024 első negyedévében [NMHH: Generations' media use in the first quarter of 2024], nmhh.hu, 1 August 2024. https://nmhh.hu/cikk/247908/Generaciok_mediahasznalata_2024_első_negyedevében (Accessed 29 January 2025).

¹⁷ For the purposes of this research, baby boomers are defined as those born before 1965, Generation X as those born between 1965 and 1980, Generation Y as those born between 1981 and 1996, and Generation Z as those born after 1996.

showed that while older generations prefer traditional media, younger generations prefer online and new media content. In summary, the researchers commented: "Both access (44%) and time spent consuming (2 hours 35 minutes) television decrease the most from baby boomers to younger generations. This phenomenon is driven by the transformation of traditional television viewing and the parallel rise of streaming providers. [...] Generational trends may also contribute to the rethinking of how and in what form different media can reach as many people as possible and reach younger target groups. In addition to the example of television, there is also a precedent for this in the case of radio, as most talk programmes are now in podcast format and in many cases in video format. Short clips of video content are produced to reach the youngest audience, for example on TikTok. The boundaries between traditional media are therefore becoming increasingly blurred, and a growing variety of TV and radio content is likely to be available online in order to maintain reach. This does not imply an ageing or obsolescence of platforms, but a personalisation of content across multiple formats and channels."¹⁸

Since 2022, NMHH publishes a "Media Market Report"¹⁹ towards the end of each year to present the main market trends and strategic challenges guiding its activities to media and communications service providers and consumers. In this summary, we set out the relevant data presented in the Media Market Report 2024.

The media market report shows that the proportion of non-internet users rises from the age of 50 onwards and, for example, while the proportion of non-internet users in the 60-62 age group is around 10%, it surpasses 50% in the 78-80 age group. Generally speaking, the proportion of non-internet users above the age of 70 is significant, which means that they have a digital deficit. The average time spent online in the overall population is 4.3 hours, but the report highlights a number of differences between social groups. The research shows that "younger people, men, people with higher education and people living in larger cities use the internet more than average". While the average time spent online among Generation Z members is roughly 5 hours, for baby boomers it is a little less than 4 hours.

An analysis of the time spent listening to the radio per day by age group shows that this time interval increases with age. In the age group 50-59 years it is about 160 minutes per day, in the age group 60-69 years about 200 minutes per day and in the age group 70+ about 210 minutes per day. Radio is therefore not a negligible media platform for the older generation.

43.3% of Hungarian citizens aged 16 and over regularly read newspapers, but age is also an important demographic differentiator: while the proportion of 16-29-year-olds is 34.5% and 39.5% respectively, the proportion of those aged 30-59 still reading newspapers is 59%, while

¹⁸ Fn. 16.

¹⁹ The reports are available at the following links:

NMHH: Médiapiaci Jelentés 2022 [Media Market Report 2022]

https://nmhh.hu/dokumentum/234335/NMHH_mediapiaci_jelentes_2022.pdf

(Accessed 1 February 2025)

NMHH: Médiapiaci Jelentés 2023 [Media Market Report 2023]

https://nmhh.hu/dokumentum/242931/mediapiaci_jelentes_2023.pdf

(Accessed 1 February 2025)

NMHH: Médiapiaci Jelentés 2024 [Media Market Report 2024]

https://nmhh.hu/dokumentum/249788/Mediapiaci_Jelentes_2024_akadalymentes.pdf

(Accessed 1 February 2025)

the proportion of 60-75-year-olds still reading newspapers is 59%. It is worth noting that the print press is facing systemic market problems: pandemic-related restrictions have significantly reduced the proportion of regular newspaper readers, the supply and circulation of available newspapers is steadily declining, and distribution opportunities are also decreasing. Of course, most readers are reached via free (typically municipal) newspapers delivered to their doorstep, with almost a fifth of people aged 16 and over consuming this type of print media in Hungary. Women's (lifestyle) magazines are also popular.

There are age-related patterns of traditional and social media consumption: young people now spend significantly less time in front of a traditional TV screen than on social media sites. The same is true for listening to traditional radio, with the youngest age group now spending more time listening to podcasts, while older people still prefer to listen to the radio. Facebook (Meta) is the unquestioned leader in social media use across all age groups, but at the time of writing the most intensive users are in their thirties. Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, Reddit are all used by young people aged 16-20.

Summary

In this report, we have tried to address three issues relevant to the Center for Independent Journalism's (CIJ) project in 2025.

On the one hand, we looked at who can be considered "elderly" in Hungary today.

On the other hand, we have tried to present the research findings that have been published in recent years on digital literacy, device penetration, device application and digital solution use, and exposure to information manipulation among the older generation, and to describe the perceptions and attitudes of the older generation towards these phenomena.

Finally, the results of research on the media consumption habits, news consumption patterns, avoidance or conscious consumption of information by the older generation, based on the last five years, are presented. Generally speaking, while the role of traditional media, especially television, is still undisputed and inescapable among members of these generations, the proportion of those moving in the digital world is increasing. The boundaries between traditional and new media are becoming increasingly blurred, with the emergence of different forms of media content (e.g. streaming services, podcasts, video content, etc.), which undoubtedly affect the media consumption habits of older generations, who are thus increasingly turning to the online space. This is a finding of particular relevance to our projects, especially in view of the increased vulnerability of older generations in the online world. In view of this, we consider that significant steps need to be taken at the level of society as a whole to protect the information security and safety of the older generation.

This project of the Center for Independent Journalism (CIJ), implemented in 2025 contributes to these aims. The project is supported by [IFEX](#).

This paper was written by Erik Uszkiewicz.