


When youth choose to disconnect: Dynamics of News Avoidance on social media

Cuando los jóvenes deciden no informarse. Dinámicas de un no a las noticias en redes sociales

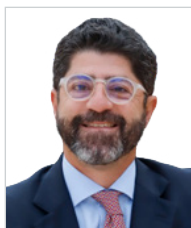


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Abstract:

In the context of information overload, where audiences have multiple ways of accessing information, news avoidance has become an increasingly frequent activity, particularly among young people. Although there is concern about its growth, further evidence is still needed not only to characterize this practice but also to consider other variables related to news consumption on social media. In this regard,

Resumen:

En un contexto de sobreabundancia de información en el que las audiencias tienen distintas maneras de acceder a la información, la evitación de noticias se está posicionando como una actividad frecuente, principalmente para los más jóvenes. Aunque existe una preocupación por su incremento, aún se requiere evidencia que no sólo caracterice esta práctica, sino que también considere otras variables del consumo informativo en redes

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this study aims to analyze news avoidance among young people aged 18 to 24 in the Metropolitan Region of Chile. The results of 385 surveys show that consistent avoidance is infrequent; instead, this group tends to distance itself from news content in a selective and occasional, particularly when news perceived as highly negative or when it affects their mental health. To do so, they develop specific actions on social media, ranging from scrolling past content to unfollowing news media accounts. These findings contribute to the understanding of news avoidance from a self-identification perspective, distinguishing it from levels of news consumption while considering incidental news. In addition, the study provides new evidence from Latin America, a region where this topic has been scarcely addressed.

Keywords:

News avoidance, young people, news practice, news consumption.

1. Introduction

News avoidance is a growing practice in digital environments, partly due to the possibility of accessing information through various platforms and the role of algorithms in the volume of content displayed on social media (Weeks and Lane, 2020; Lege and Ibrahim, 2024). As a result, a sense of information overload has been established among audiences (Ohme *et al.*, 2022; Schäfer *et al.*, 2024). As evidenced by the Digital News Report (Newman *et al.*, 2025), levels of news avoidance are the highest on record, reaching 40% globally.

Although this is a topic of study that has generated interest for research, there are still no conclusive findings regarding its conceptualisation (Palmer *et al.*, 2023; Vliegenthart *et al.*, 2025). Neither has it regarded its impacts, for example, on journalistic work (Andersen *et al.*, 2024; Sui *et al.*, 2024; Palmer and Edgerly, 2024), on politics or on disinformation (Damstra *et al.*, 2023; Hasell and Halversen, 2024).

Whilst the reasons behind this have been identified (Carbone *et al.*, 2024), less research has reviewed the different types of avoidance and audiences (Skovsgaard and Andersen, 2020; Edgerly, 2023; Hopmann *et al.*, 2024). Findings to date have focused more on the United States and Europe than on Latin America (Orchard *et al.*, 2025). Thus further exploration becomes necessary (Toff and Kalogeropoulos, 2020; Gorski and Thomas, 2022; Toff *et al.*, 2023; Li *et al.*, 2024).

In this regard, this study aims to analyse news avoidance among young Chileans, as this group is among those who most frequently report avoiding current affairs in Latin America (Newman *et al.*, 2025). Based on 385 surveys, the study examines the characteristics of news consumption among this group, identifying the types of avoidance (selective and occasional), the main reasons behind the practice, and the specific actions that they take to distance themselves from the content.

sociales. En esa línea, esta investigación pretende analizar la evitación de noticias de los jóvenes entre los 18 y 24 años de la Región Metropolitana de Chile. Los resultados de 385 encuestas muestran que la evitación consistente es poco frecuente y que más bien, este grupo intenta alejarse de los contenidos de manera selectiva y ocasional, cuando las noticias les parecen muy negativas o porque tienen un impacto en su salud mental. Para lograrlo, desarrollan acciones específicas en sus redes sociales, las que van desde el scroll hasta dejar de seguir cuentas de medios. Estos hallazgos contribuyen en la comprensión de la evasión desde la autoidentificación, para distinguirla del nivel de revisión de medios y el consumo incidental. Además, entrega nuevos antecedentes en América Latina, región en la que el tema ha sido escasamente abordado.

Palabras clave:

Evitación de noticias, jóvenes, prácticas informativas, redes sociales, consumo informativo.

Analysing young people's news-related practices can generate valuable data to guide the media industry and support its sustainability (Catalina-García *et al.*, 2021). This group has the potential to reflect news trends in the near future (Eddy, 2023; Goirizelaia *et al.*, 2025) and drive innovation in news formats, given the prevalent role that the media play as sources of information (Duvekot *et al.*, 2024; Itzkowitz *et al.*, 2024).

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Conceptualisation and typology of news avoidance

The definition of news avoidance has taken various approaches, depending on consumption patterns or the frequency with which individuals claim to distance themselves from current affairs (Palmer and Toff, 2020; Edgerly, 2022) and its understanding as a practice integrated with other news-related activities (Toff and Kalogeropoulos, 2020; Aharoni *et al.*, 2020; Vandenplas *et al.*, 2021).

One of the commonly used definitions is that proposed by Skovsgaard and Andersen (2020), who understand it as a low level of intentional news consumption over a period. However, this phenomenon has recently been approached through consumption profiles to distinguish the various nuances associated with avoidance (De Bruin *et al.*, 2025; Vliegenthart *et al.*, 2025).

In this sense, avoidance can take different forms. One of these focuses on intentionality, where people decide to distance themselves from the news or prefer other content (Skovsgaard and Andersen, 2020; Edgerly, 2023; Gorski, 2023).

Alternatively, assessment of this practice could involve its temporal nature. Such approach evaluates whether it occurs consistently or continuously over time (Skovsgaard and Andersen, 2022; Newman *et al.*, 2023; Andersen *et al.*, 2024) or whether it occurs in specific or occasional circumstances (Skovsgaard and Andersen, 2022; Andersen *et al.*, 2024) Furthermore, it may arise selectively in response to topics (Schäfer *et al.*, 2024) that generate saturation (Boczkowski, 2022) or negative emotions in audiences (Ohme *et al.*, 2022; Villi *et al.*, 2021; De Bruin *et al.*, 2024).

These distinctions demonstrate that avoidance is a practice dependent on multiple factors. Research in this field has categorised these into contextual and individual factors (Villi *et al.*, 2021; Skovsgaard and Andersen, 2022; Gorski, 2023). At the contextual level, the media supply and system (Palmer and Toff, 2022; Villi *et al.*, 2021) and elements related to news consumption cultures (Toff and Kalogeropoulos, 2020; Lee, 2024) exert an influence.

On the other hand, individual factors are linked to demographic characteristics such as age or gender, being more prevalent among young people (Espeland, 2024; Hopmann *et al.*, 2024) and women (Chan *et al.*, 2021; Beattie *et al.*, 2024). Moreover, the media perceptions (Serrano Puche, 2020) influence this, as do trust in the content received from them (Park *et al.*, 2024) and the emotions evoked by the news, which are generally negative (Carbone *et al.*, 2024; Fayne, 2024).

Avoidance is manifested through specific actions, by means of which people feel they can control the content of their news intake (Lee *et al.*, 2019). These may involve partial decisions, such as regulating the amount of time spent on the news, or general decisions, for example, by stopping media checking or turning off notifications (Nguyen *et al.*, 2023; Newman *et al.*, 2023).

2.2. Characteristics of news avoidance in Latin America

Most research on news avoidance has focused on this information-seeking practice in the United States and Europe, highlighting the need for studies centred on the specific characteristics in Latin America (Orchard *et al.*, 2025).

From a regional perspective, studies offer evidence-based findings that bring together several countries, for example, on university students studying Communication (Investigar en red, 2025; Gómez *et al.*, 2026). The majority of these students reveal that they avoid the news due to its negativity and topics that provoke debate. Among the most frequently mentioned are politics, wars and topics reminiscent of the pandemic.

There are specific references in Argentina, such as the study by Villi *et al.* (2021), that explains the causes of this phenomenon as linked to the perception of corruption in politics. Separately, in Chile, the findings focus on specific circumstances such as the pandemic (Peña, Lillo and Guzmán, 2022; Rocamora *et al.*, 2023) and migration (Sibrian *et al.*, 2024).

Others, in smaller numbers, have focused on characterising the practice, with their results showing that avoidance is mostly intentional but limited to specific topics, meaning that only a smaller group avoids news in general (Mellado and Cruz, 2024a; Mellado and Cruz, 2025). Moreover, it has become clear that distancing oneself from the news is not necessarily linked to low news consumption (Mellado and Cruz, 2024b).

2.3. News avoidance among young people

News avoidance among young people is associated with the level of consumption (Shehata, 2016; Edgerly *et al.*, 2017) and news repertoires (Vandenplas *et al.*, 2021), as one of the activities forming part of news routines (Aharoni *et al.*, 2020) or as a strategy in the context of information overload (Albarelo, 2020). Consequently, there is a clear need to understand the nuances of avoidance and to distinguish it from consumption, as it does not imply an intention to distance oneself from current affairs (De Bruin *et al.*, 2024). Such is particularly evident among young people due to the general characteristics of their news consumption, which is linked to a lack of established routines (Bengtsson and Johansson, 2024), thereby facilitating incidental encounters on social media (Ceballos-del-Cid *et al.*, 2025).

Research focusing on this group shows that this practice primarily stems from influenced by emotional factors, including negativity, information overload, and a preference for engaging in activities unrelated to the news (Schröder and Ørsten, 2016; Vandenplas *et al.*, 2021; Kormelink and Gunnewiek, 2022; Pérez Altable *et al.*, 2024). Besides, this practice varies according to the context. For instance, during the pandemic, critical shifts in the moments when young people decide to stay informed or not were linked to the overabundance of information and its negativity (Vandenplas *et al.*, 2021).

Consequently, their motivations for turning away from content differ from those found in other groups, where, for example, it derives from perceptions of quality (Goyanes *et al.*, 2023; Setianto and Praceka, 2023), trust (Salaverría *et al.*, 2024) or the media system (Palmer and Toff, 2022). Particularly among young Latin Americans, this has been studied in communication students (Investigar en red, 2025; Gómez *et al.*, 2026), demonstrating that news avoidance is primarily selective in response their perceived negativity, for which they develop coping or protective strategies to manage the volume of received information.

Meanwhile, research in Chile shows that this is a very common practice among young people aged 18 to 24, making it one of the leading countries in the region (Newman *et al.*, 2025). Furthermore, as stated, this demographic group avoids news content because they are not interested in it, due to a lack of time, and because they consider the news to be biased (Ciclos UDP, 2022).

3. Methodology

3.1. Objectives and research questions

The overall objective of this study is to analyse news avoidance among young Chileans aged between 18 and 24 living in the Metropolitan Region of Chile. To this end, three specific objectives were established: 1) To characterise the news consumption of those who claim to avoid the news, 2) To analyse the types of avoidance (consistent, selective and occasional), and 3) To identify the factors that explain this practice.

Although there is some general background information; to explore this practice in greater depth, we have formulated the following questions:

- Q1. How do young people in Chile, who claim to avoid the news, keep themselves informed?
- Q2. Which type of avoidance (consistent, selective or occasional) is most common among young people in Chile?
- Q3. What factors lead young people in Chile to want to avoid the news?

3.2. Population and sample characteristics

To answer these questions, the present exploratory study employed self-administered questionnaires. Although their use presents certain disadvantages, such as low response rates (Feria *et al.*, 2020) and a lack of control over the context in which participants respond (Malegarie and Fernández, 2019), they facilitate the process of data collection, analysis and processing, along with reducing interviewer bias (Pozzo *et al.*, 2018) and improving coverage (Díaz de Rada, 2021).

The studied population were people between 18 and 24 years old, residing in the Metropolitan Region. In Chile, according to the most recent census data, there are 1,897,114 young people in this age group, primarily located in the Metropolitan Region (804,155), Valparaíso (200,624), BioBío (171,891), Maule (103,187) and La Araucanía (101,284). In terms of educational level, according to the tenth Chilean Government's *Encuesta Nacional de las Juventudes* [National Youth Survey], the proportion of young people with a complete or incomplete university education is at the highest levels on record (*Instituto Nacional de la Juventud* [Chile's National Youth Institute], 2022).

Furthermore, this group tends to own more technological devices than the general population, primarily *smartphones* (*Consejo Nacional de Televisión* [Chilean National Television Council], 2018). In the country, internet penetration stands at a remarkable 95% (Fernández and Núñez-Mussa, 2025), and many youngsters access the internet due to the total penetration rate of 112.36 per 100 inhabitants (Subtel, 2026), which indicates coverage of 100% and suggests widespread use, with some members of the population having more than one active line or connection. Hence, as studies in this field show (Portman and

Veneti, 2022; Anter and Kümpel, 2023; Hendrickx, 2025; Itzkowitz *et al.*, 2024), this segment most clearly reflects changes in information-seeking practices, including news avoidance (Schröder and Ørsten, 2016; Hopmann *et al.*, 2024).

Regarding the sampling method used, this was non-probabilistic convenience sampling, considering certain reference parameters to estimate the sample size. Using data from the Census, the population size of those aged 18–24, in the Metropolitan Region of Chile, was calculated, and a confidence level of 95%, a margin of error of 5% and a scenario of maximum heterogeneity ($p=0.5$; $q=0.5$) were established. The final sample comprises the responses of 385 participants.

3.3. Characteristics of the data collection instrument

The questionnaire included 34 questions, 30 of which were closed-ended and 4 were open-ended. Among the closed-ended items, 6 were dichotomous, 24 were multi-item, and 16 responded to a five-point Likert scale. In addition, sociodemographic variables, namely, gender, age, educational level and occupation, were considered.

The survey posed three thematic sections: characteristics of information behaviour, news consumption and news avoidance. This structure responds to the need highlighted in previous studies (such as Edgerly, 2023; Ohme *et al.*, 2023; Andersen *et al.*, 2024) to address consumption and avoidance jointly, as this is a practice integrated into various information routines (Toff and Kalogeropoulos, 2020; Aharoni *et al.*, 2020; Vandenplas *et al.*, 2021).

Regarding information behaviour, the study considered the social media platforms used, the time spent on these platforms, the devices used to access news, reasons for viewing and seeking out news, and the sources of news access (intentional or incidental).

To measure news consumption (which used a five-point Likert scale where 1 = Never and 5 = Very frequently), the questions focused on the following media and platforms (examples were provided in each case so that respondents could consider them when answering): Free-to-air television (e.g. TVN), cable television (e.g. *24 horas*), print media (e.g. *El Mercurio*), radio (e.g. Bio Bio), online versions of traditional media (e.g. Emol.com), online-only media (e.g. *elmostrador.cl*, *eldesconcerto.cl*, etc.), news podcasts from media outlets, traditional media accounts (e.g. Bio Bio's X account), independent or alternative media accounts on social media, and *influencers*. Likewise, the survey regarded consumption on Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, X, YouTube and TikTok.

Furthermore, as incidental consumption is a type of news access increasingly characteristic of young people (Farias-Battle *et al.*, 2024), the questionnaire also incorporates this category. Questions about that type of consumption focused on the frequency of encounter, the social media platforms on which it occurs, and the activities associated with the discovery.

Similarly, questions encompassed perceptions of information. Namely, the survey addressed interest in the news (measured on a five-point Likert scale where 1 = Not at all interested and 5 = Very interested), and trust in the media mentioned previously (using a five-point Likert scale where 1 = Not at all trustworthy and 5 = Very trustworthy).

Specifically, news avoidance comprised five dimensions identified in previous research. Firstly, assessment of intentionality was based on self-identification (Skovsgaard and Andersen, 2020) using a dichotomous question with two response categories

(yes/no). The frequency of avoidance (Gorski, 2023) was also included, on a five-point Likert scale (where 1 = Never and 5 = Very frequently).

One of the complexities in conceptualising avoidance lies in how to operationalise it and its relationship with news consumption. To address this, the research approaches it from the perspective of participants' self-identification of the practice, which is particularly useful in exploratory research (Skovsgaard and Andersen, 2022). Consequently, it is possible to identify the nuances or typology and, thereby, distinguish it from consumption. As noted, the two are not necessarily linked, but may instead constitute intermittent behaviour (Toff and Kalogeropoulos, 2020), particularly among young people (Aharoni *et al.*, 2020; Vandenplas *et al.*, 2021).

The typology (consistent, selective or occasional) was also included, i.e., the time and topics in relation to which it may occur (Skovsgaard and Andersen, 2022; Andersen *et al.*, 2024; Schäfer *et al.*, 2024; Mellado and Cruz, 2024). Selective avoidance was measured using a five-point Likert scale. Meanwhile, two questions regarded occasional avoidance: a dichotomous (yes/no) question and an open-ended question, for participants to specify the time when they engage in the practice.

Other questions focused on the emotions that explain why they decide to avoid the news (Villi *et al.*, 2021; Gorski, 2023), including the actions taken to achieve this avoidance (Lee *et al.*, 2020). These items were measured using multiple-choice questions with an open-ended option (other').

The questions used to measure avoidance were as follows: 1) Do you intentionally avoid the news? 2) How often have you intentionally avoided the news? 3) How often do you intentionally avoid news on the following topics? 4) Do you avoid the news at any particular time? 5) At what times do you avoid the news? 5) When you avoid the news, for what reasons do you do so?, 6) What emotions lead you to avoid the news?, and 7) If you try to intentionally avoid the news, which of the following activities do you engage in on social media?

The survey was disseminated via social media and through a collaborative effort with *Televisión Nacional de Chile* (TVN) [Chile's National Television], which published it on their news website (24horas.cl) and on Facebook.

3.4. Data analysis

The quantitative analysis process consisted of two stages. The first involved data cleaning of the dataset downloaded from SurveyMonkey, discarding incomplete survey responses. In this regard, 694 people accessed the questionnaire, of whom 467 completed it; after applying the inclusion criteria for age and region, 385 met the minimum number required for the sample to be valid, as previously calculated and presented. Of the participants in this study, 216 were women (56.1%), 167 were men (43.4%) and two preferred not to state their gender (0.5%).

Subsequently, the conducted descriptive statistical analyses implied examining the distributions of frequency, mean, mode, media and standard deviation to assess the dispersion of the data. This process led to gaining a general understanding of the participants in this study.

Also, inferential analyses took place using various tests (Mann-Whitney U test, Kruskal-Wallis test, Wilcoxon test, Friedman test, Spearman's correlation and chi-square test). The statistical software used was *RStudio*.

In terms of the treatment of variables measured using a Likert scale, the original categories were used in the analysis, without recording, to preserve the variability of the responses.

Gender was incorporated into the analysis as a segmenting variable to explore possible differences in news consumption and news avoidance. This decision aligns with findings from other studies in the field, which indicate that women tend to avoid the news to a greater extent than men (Serrano Puche, 2020; Chan *et al.*, 2021; Beattie *et al.*, 2024).

In the case of responses to the open-ended question on occasional avoidance (When do you avoid the news?), the information collected was categorised using inductive analysis. The coding unit was the participant's full response, as it referred to a specific moment and, therefore, each unit presented a single theme, which facilitated its assignment. Two researchers specialised in journalism and audiences carried out the coding.

The 73 responses to this question fell into four categories. Firstly, "specific moments in the routine" refers to the temporal distribution and daily activities. Consequently, the inclusion criteria were time slots (morning, evening), physiological activities (eating, sleeping), occupation (study, work) and periods of rest or leisure (public holidays, holidays and social activities).

A second category was termed "moods", which refers to individual factors. The inclusion criteria were specific references to emotions such as anxiety, sadness, tiredness, stress or overwhelm. Meanwhile, a third classification was that of "perceptions of media coverage and/or public discussions", which addresses avoidance of content, tone or the perceived quality of news. The inclusion criteria were polarisation, specific topics classified as negative and repetition of themes.

Finally, the fourth category refers to "social context", which relates to disruptive situations at a social or political level. The inclusion criteria were mentions of periods of instability, chaos or tragedies. Simultaneously, for items measured using multiple-choice questions with open-ended text (other), the analysis proceeded using inductive thematic coding.

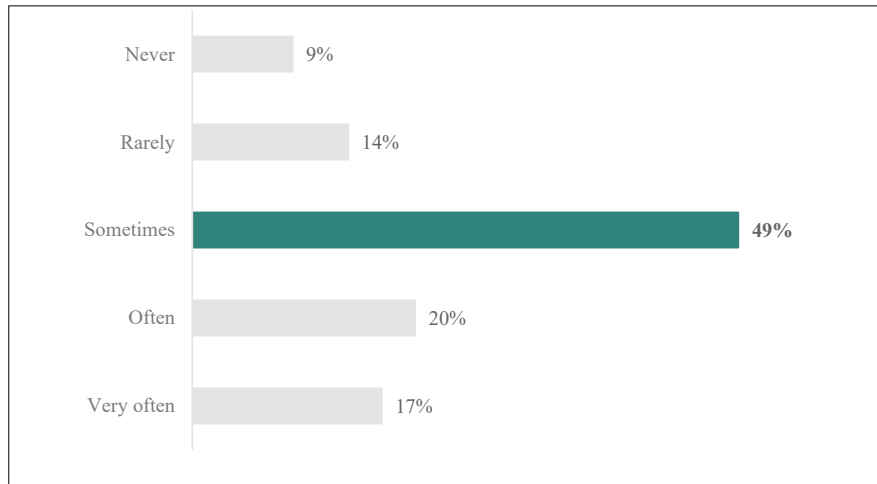
The ethical requirements for researchers conducting self-administered surveys remained present, as these require greater attention, control and honesty when collecting and analysing the data obtained (Frippiat and Marquis, 2010). The platform used ensures data storage security, privacy and reliability. To ensure the integrity of the process, the informed consent form, reviewed by the Scientific Ethics Committee of the University of the Andes, Chile (Reference: CEC2024076), is presented before the survey begins.

4. Results

4.1. Characteristics of news avoidance

The results of this study show that news avoidance is not a widespread practice among young people. Only 29% (n=110) state that they intentionally avoid the news, and following a chi-square test, there is no evidence of significant differences according to gender ($X^2(2, n=385)=3.40, p=.183$).

Most of those who claim to avoid the news state that they sometimes (49%) steer clear of current affairs content, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Frequency of news avoidance among those who intentionally avoid the news (n=110)

Source: Author's own work

The frequency of avoidance (measured on a five-point Likert scale) had a mean of 3.42 (SD=0.95), suggesting that this is a moderate practice within this group. Furthermore, the standard deviation indicates some heterogeneity in the responses, reflecting that avoidance does not manifest with the same intensity across this group of young people.

To explore the characteristics of this practice in greater depth, the strategies used to distance oneself from the news became worthy of examination. To this end, a multiple-choice question, with an open-ended response option (other'), was used. The item formulated the following: 'If you intentionally try to avoid the news, which of the following activities do you carry out on social media?'

The results show that the most common action is to *scroll* past the news *feed* when news items appear (22%). Other options include checking social media less frequently (9%), unfollowing media accounts (9%) and blocking notifications (4%). Besides, 2.7% of respondents (n=3) chose to add other strategies in the open-ended response, relating to specific decisions on social media. Their statements were as follows: "*selecting the option to stop similar content from appearing*", "*following a few news outlets*"; and "*I read the headline, and if I feel the news might affect me, I scroll past it*" (our translation).

4.2. How do those who claim to avoid the news keep themselves informed?

Young people who say they avoid the news (n=110) frequently learn the news from traditional media accounts on social media (27%), independent media accounts or alternative websites on social media (27%) and the online versions of traditional media (24%). As for traditional media, there is a clear preference for both free-to-air (22%) and cable (16%) television, as well as radio (16%). Meanwhile, the social media platforms on which they most frequently consume news are Instagram (60%) and TikTok (27%).

The relationship between consumption and avoidance demanded the application of Spearman's correlation. The results show significant negative correlations for free-to-air television ($r_s = -0,302$, $p = 0,001$) and independent or alternative media accounts on social media ($r_s = -0,252$, $p = 0,008$). There is also a negative and significant relationship with X ($r_s = -0,199$, $p = 0,037$) and with online-only media ($r_s = -0,191$, $p = 0,045$). These data indicate that the higher the consumption of news specifically via these media, the less likely those who prefer them are to avoid current affairs content.

An interesting link between this practice and incidental consumption stands out among the findings. Fifty per cent of those who frequently avoid the news come across it on social media, which occurs primarily on Instagram (45%) and TikTok (27%). However, there is no significant correlation between incidental consumption (both in general and on specific social media platforms) and the frequency of avoidance.

To analyse young people's news-related practices, it is also important to consider other factors that influence their information consumption and avoidance strategies, highlighting their interest in and trust of the media. Regarding the interest of participants who avoid the news (n=110), 36% indicate that they are not at all or only slightly interested, whilst 21% state that they are interested or very interested. Consequently, those who most frequently avoid news content tend to have less interest in it, as confirmed by a significant negative correlation ($r_s = -0,333$, $p = 0,001$).

To compare the results regarding trust in the news amongst those who state that they intentionally avoid current affairs content, each news outlet (traditional media, online versions and social media accounts) underwent a Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples. In five of the media outlets, significant differences exist between those who claim to avoid or not to avoid the news, and their trust in the media, specifically those listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Mann-Whitney U test between intentional avoidance and trust in the news

Media types	U statistic	Z	p-value	Average rank (if avoids)	Average rank (does not avoid)
Free-to-air television	177,783.500	3,035	0.002	165.85	202.40
Cable television	17,642.00	2.652	0.008	170.12	202.15
Online version of traditional media	17,786,500	2,887	0.004	167.80	202.41
Online media only	17,750,000	2,852	0.004	168.14	202.28
Traditional media accounts on social media	18,233,000	3,283	0.001	164.75	204.30

Source: Author's own calculations. The significance level is .05.

In line with the significant differences in these media and the average scores, participants who claim not to avoid the news have greater trust in the media than those who do. These results suggest that trust is a relevant predictor of intentional news avoidance. Among the media with the highest level of significance, traditional media accounts on social media rank first, which may suggest that mistrust acts as a catalyst for avoidance in the digital environment.

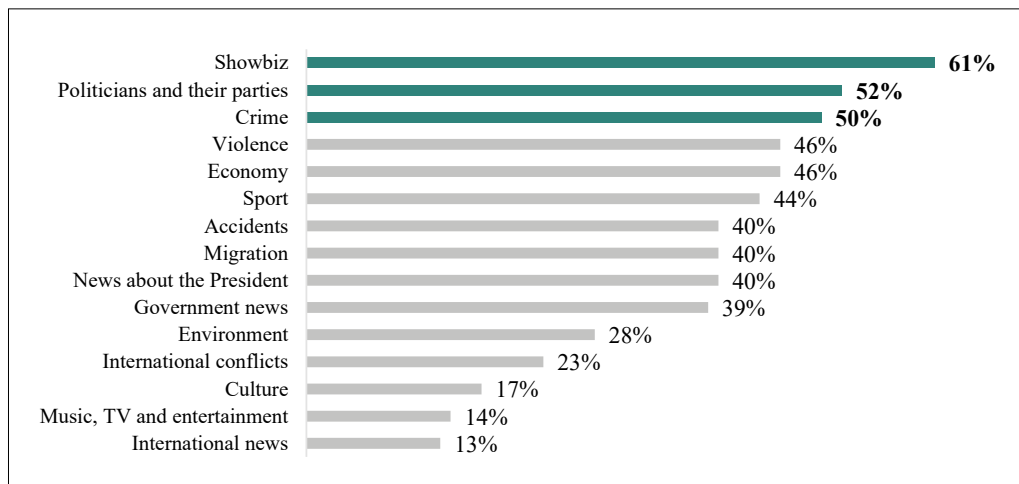
Secondly, the findings regarding free-to-air television stand out; for a section of the young audience, this is a medium they trust and therefore consume. However, amongst those who avoid the news, the findings may indicate scepticism towards news coverage on this platform.

Finally, both online-only media and the online versions of traditional media have the same level of significance; that is, those who avoid news on websites do so across the board and harbour mistrust regardless of the news brand's origin.

4.2. Types of news avoidance: selective and occasional

As mentioned, news avoidance can also be distinguished by type: selective, when subject avoids information on certain topics; or occasional, when it occurs at specific times. Regarding selective avoidance, the results presented in Figure 2 show that avoidance of celebrity news, news about politicians and their parties, and crime are the most prominent. These classifications enable the highlighting of distinctions by section, as in the case of politics (news about politicians and their parties, the president or the government) and national issues (such as migration, crime or accidents).

Figure 2. Selective avoidance of news

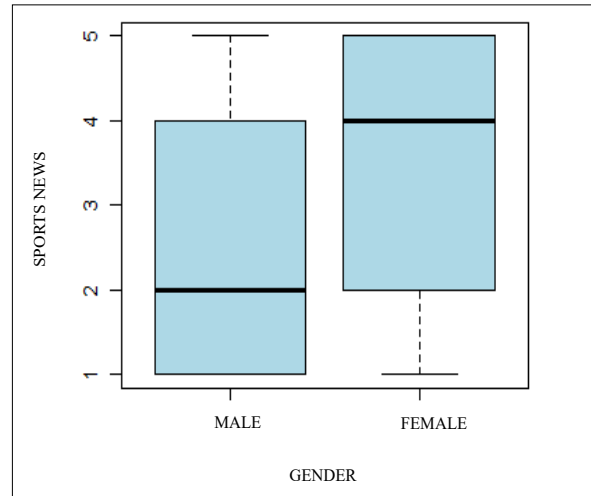


Source: Author's own work. The results reflect the responses of those who, frequently or very frequently, avoid the previously mentioned topics. Furthermore, participants could select more than one option, so the percentages do not add up to 100

Using a Spearman correlation, certain topics are evidently attached to habitual news avoidance. The findings indicate positive and significant correlations for violence ($r_s = -0.308, p = .001$), news about politicians and/or their parties ($r_s = -0.261, p = 0.006$), government news ($r_s = -0.278, p = 0.003$), news about the president ($r_s = -0.290, p = 0.002$), international conflicts ($r_s = -0.369, p = 0.001$), international news ($r_s = -0.257, p = 0.007$) and accidents ($r_s = -0.270, p = 0.004$).

Whereas the rest do not show a significant relationship, which could indicate that topics with a negative connotation, or those perceived as such by young people, are avoided more frequently, unlike other content such as culture, music and the environment.

Furthermore, to compare the frequency of avoidance of different news topics by gender, given the cited relevance of this variable cited in this matter, the Kruskal-Wallis test for independent samples was applied. The fifteen topics underwent tests, but significant differences between groups were only found for sports news ($H(2) = 9.27, p = 0.010$). Figure 3 shows that the median for the 'Female' group (4.00) is higher than that for the 'Male' group (2.00).

Figure 3. Kruskal-Wallis test for gender and the “sports” topic in news avoidance

Source: Author's own work

Regarding the findings on occasional avoidance, 66% stated that they avoid the news at certain times. To define these instances, the survey included an open-ended question to be answered only by those who stated that they avoided the content in specific circumstances (n=73).

To aid the understanding, responses were selected and divided into four categories: 1) specific moments in the daily routine, 2) moods, 3) perceptions of media coverage and/or public discussions, and 4) social context. The definition of the classification and the inclusion criteria, as well as the analysis procedure, are detailed in the methodology.

A total of 73 recorded responses went through a process of selection and elimination of duplicates (specifically for mentions of moments such as meals or stress-related moods). Table 2 presents the options mentioned by the participants.

Table 2. Times when young people decide to avoid the news

Classification of moments to avoid the news	Participants' responses (our translations)
Specific times in the daily routine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>"In the mornings"</i> ● <i>"At lunch and when I'm with my family."</i> ● <i>"When I'm working."</i> ● <i>"When I want to rest."</i> ● <i>"In the evenings"</i> ● <i>"At social events"</i> ● <i>"Holidays"</i> ● <i>"Holidays"</i>
Moods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>"When I'm very tired"</i> ● <i>"When I'm feeling emotionally sensitive"</i> ● <i>"When I feel most anxious"</i> ● <i>"When I feel really mentally exhausted"</i> ● <i>"When I feel overwhelmed."</i> ● <i>"When I feel a lot of stress about the state of the world"</i>
Perceptions of media coverage and/or public discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>"When they talk about violence and crime."</i> ● <i>"When they talk a lot about politics. Personally, I don't like talking or hearing much about politics, unless it's to inform myself about a specific issue (education, elections, etc.)"</i> ● <i>"When it gets very repetitive."</i> ● <i>"When they only show negative things."</i>
Social context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>"When there's too much chaos because of a particular situation."</i> ● <i>"When there are major tragedies."</i> ● <i>"When an event occurs that could trigger mass xenophobic reactions"</i>

Source: Compiled by the author

As the findings reveal, young people in this study primarily avoid news in contexts related to daily activities. These circumstances include studying and working routines, confirming once more that they engage with the news at times associated with their needs.

4.3. Factors explaining why young people choose to avoid the news

News avoidance analysis comprehends factors that explain why people deliberately distance themselves from the content. Among those who say they avoid the news (n=110), the main reasons for steering clear of the content relate to the negative impact on their mood (20%), to look after their mental health (17%), a feeling of powerlessness in the face of realities they cannot change (12%) and because they feel it disrupts their ability to concentrate on more important things (11%).

Perceptions of the information provided by the media are also decisive; for example, when they consider the news to be very negative (20%), because they feel it always ‘talks about the same issue’ (18%), or because they believe they cannot trust the accuracy of the content (8%). In this regard, moods play an important role in this practice. Specifically, the emotions experienced in response to the news they avoid are anxiety (17%), frustration (15%), anger (10%), fear (9%) and sadness (8%). This question included an open-ended response option, answered by only 9% of the sample (n=10). The collected responses identified emerging emotions such as boredom, disappointment, hopelessness and helplessness, annoyance, laziness, indifference, and insecurity. Within this open category, disinterest stands out, with three mentions of this term.

5. Discussion and conclusions

In relation to other studies, news avoidance is a frequent activity in young people’s information routines (Skovsgaard and Andersen, 2022; Kormelink and Gunnewiek, 2022; Espeland, 2024; Hopmann *et al.*, 2024). However, it is essential to examine it from the perspective of self-identification, rather than solely in terms of news consumption levels, particularly because, as demonstrated, it occurs primarily in relation to specific topics or at particular times, rather than in a general manner. Therefore, and in response to the first question (Q1), the research reinforces previous findings regarding avoidance as a phase that characterises the information practices of this demographic (Toff and Kalogeropoulos, 2020; Aharoni *et al.*, 2020; Vandenplas *et al.*, 2021).

Accordingly, in response to the first specific objective, avoidance can be complemented by incidental consumption, making it the means by which those who distance themselves from content connect with current affairs—a finding that provides evidence in a currently less explored area (Serrano Puche *et al.*, 2021; Goyanes *et al.*, 2023).

In response to question (Q2) and the study’s second specific objective, the most frequent types of avoidance are selective and occasional. Young people deliberately distance themselves from news depending on the subject matter, including stories about showbiz, politicians and their parties, and crime. Moreover, the results highlight significant and positive correlations with the frequency of avoidance in the case of violence, news about politicians and/or their parties, government news, news about the president, international conflicts, international news and news covering accidents.

In terms of gender, a relevant factor in this practice (Serrano Puche, 2020; Beattie *et al.*, 2024), differences only exist in sports-related matters. In this sense, this finding seems linked to the perception mentioned in previous research (Edgerly, 2022; Palmer and Toff, 2022; Toff and Nielsen, 2022), which explains the avoidance of certain topics due to audiences’ perception that the news is ‘not for me,’ either due to a lack of interest or because it seems irrelevant and distant from their own identity.

Thus, future studies should further examine the role of the media in shaping sports coverage from a female perspective, given that women are under-represented compared to men (Fujak *et al.*, 2025). Additionally, this is due to gender stereotypes (Yu and Shin, 2025), which could explain the rejection of such content.

In the case of occasional avoidance, the study confirms the significance of news not disrupting daily activities and moods for this group. Hence, when faced with highly repetitive coverage or social crises, they prefer to distance themselves from current affairs content to preserve their mental health. Consequently, and in relation to the third question (Q3) and specific objective, it is confirmed that this practice is influenced primarily by individual factors—that is, linked to emotions such as anxiety, frustration or sadness—and contextual factors, including the perception of media coverage and specific contexts.

Identifying certain topics that generate widespread rejection may be useful in finding answers to the questions raised in current journalistic debates, which seek to avoid avoidance and, often, misinformation (Hendrickx, 2025). Thus, changes to the tone rather than the substance would attract a greater number of young people (Røsok-Dahl, 2025) without compromising the journalistic standards for presenting these issues. These shifts involve a constructive perspective (focused on the context of the information), a sense of when it is most favourable to publish them (given that avoidance occurs in specific circumstances such as mornings and evenings) and including a greater diversity of viewpoints that represent such reality.

Although the results may provide further details on news avoidance in Latin America, it would be necessary to expand research in the region. Comparative studies would enable the identification of similarities and differences in this practice in relation to political, social and cultural characteristics, enriching the analysis.

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7. Specific contributions of each author

	Name and Surname
Conception and design of the work	Rocío Gómez and Cristóbal Benavides
Methodology	Rocío Gómez
Data collection and analysis	Rocío Gómez
Discussion and conclusions	Rocío Gómez and Cristóbal Benavides
Drafting, formatting, version review and approval	Rocío Gómez and Cristóbal Benavides

8. Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest contained in this article.

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