

Young readers spend more time with newspapers in print than online

December 7 2017



Credit: City University London

Readers aged 18 to 34 are spending nearly twice as much time with newspapers' print editions than with their websites and apps, according to a new study.

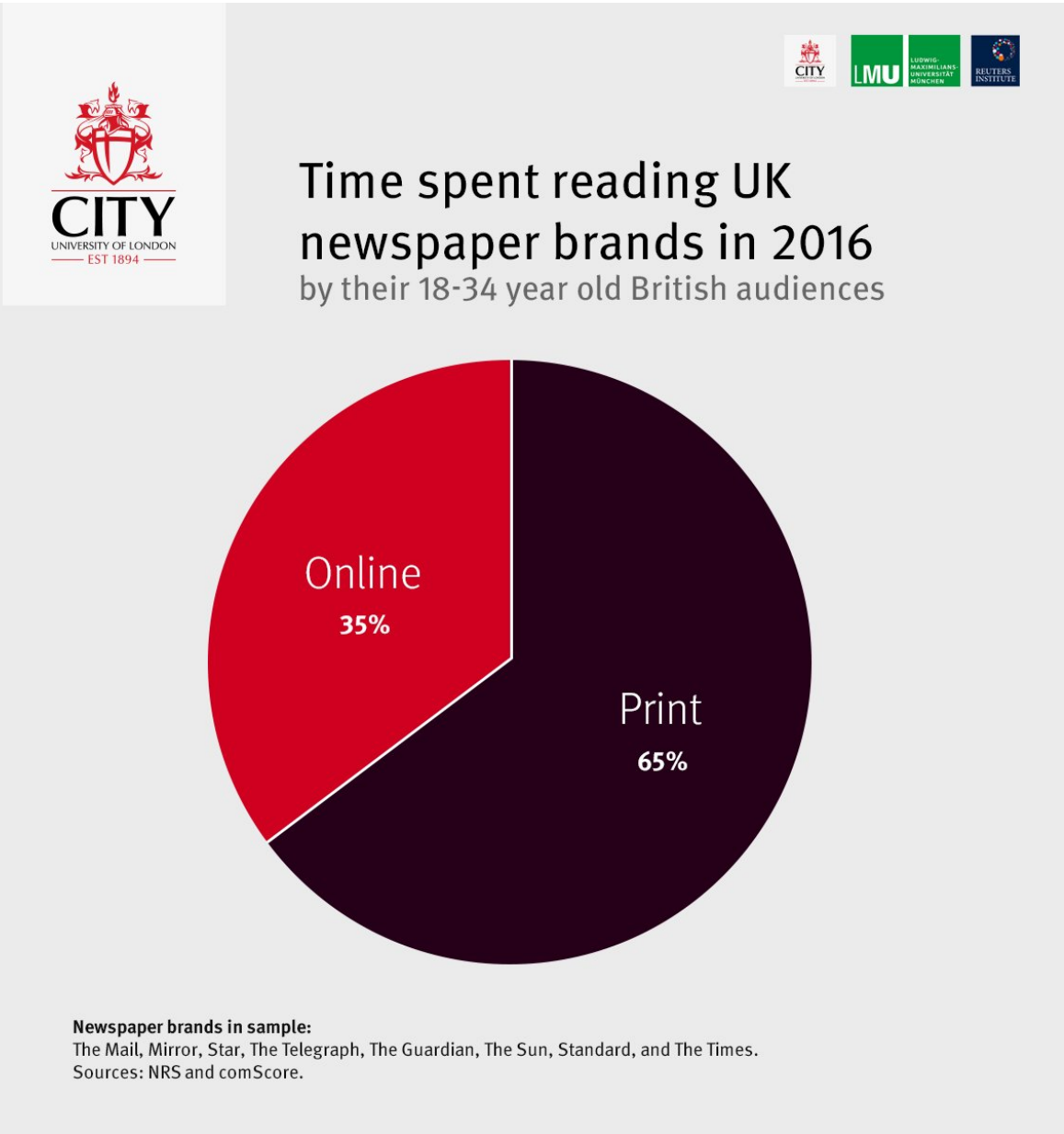
In 2016, the 18- to 34-year-old British readers of eight UK national newspapers spent a total of 21.7 billion minutes reading the news brands' print editions, but just 11.9 billion minutes using their websites and apps.

The researchers, led by Professor Neil Thurman of City, University of London and LMU Munich, used a large-scale survey and online user measurement to investigate the total time spent with newspapers in print and online.

The results show that, despite falls in the circulation of newspapers and increases in news consumption via smartphones, readers of all ages still spend more time with newspapers' 'dead-tree' editions than with their websites and apps.

Professor Thurman, of the Department of Journalism at City, said: "For younger readers, like for middle-aged and older consumers, newspapers' print editions provide an experience they invest time in, compared to how they snack on and scan news online."

The study shows that newspapers' 18- to 34-year-old print readers spend an average of 23 minutes reading each weekday print issue (and more on Saturdays and Sundays).



Credit: City University London

However, those same newspapers' 18- to 34-year-old online readers visit the brands websites and apps for an average of less than one minute per day (43 seconds).

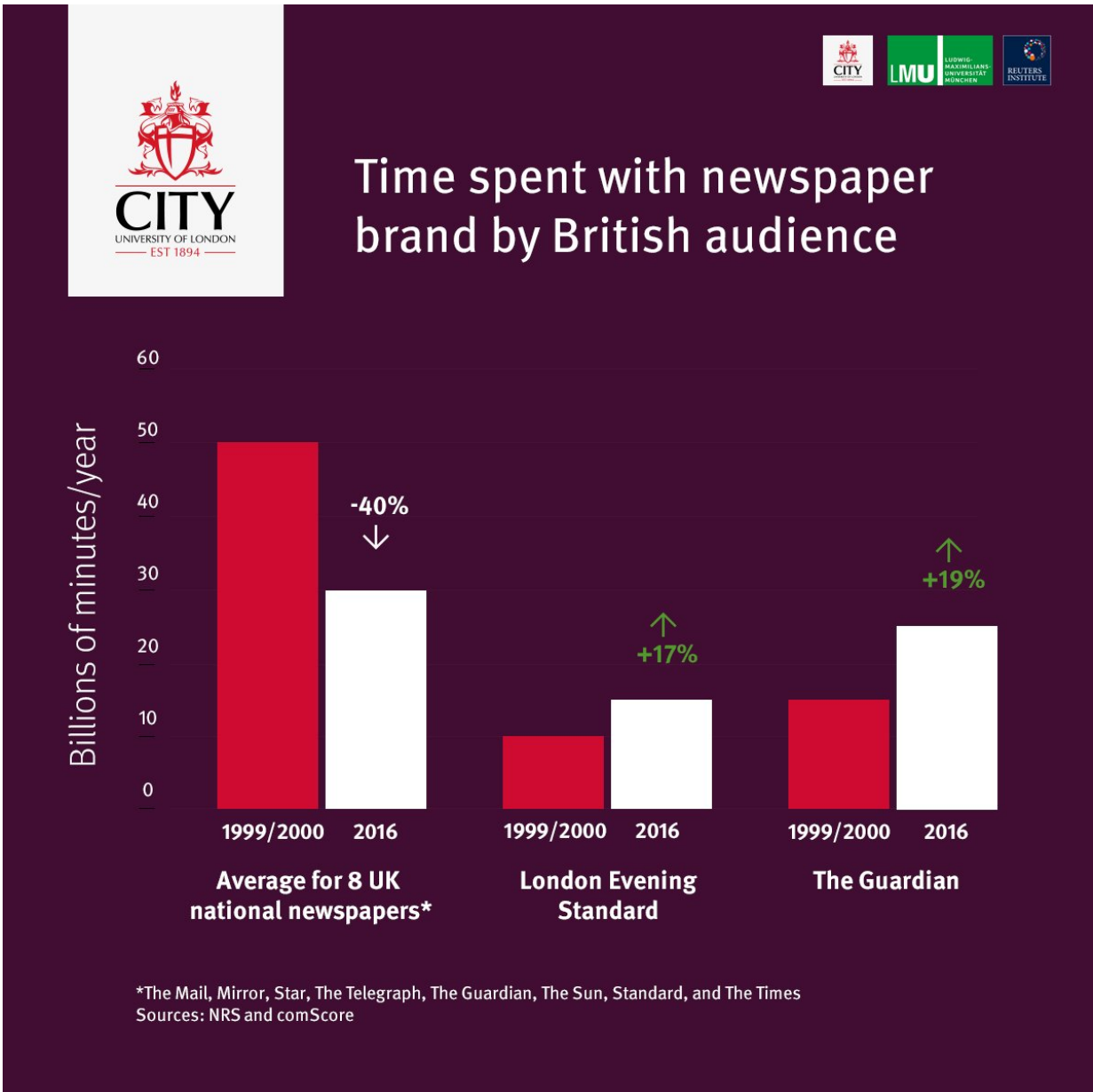
The distinct Daily Mail

The report reveals one exception to this trend, the Daily Mail. Brits under 35 spend more than twice as much time with the brand online than in print.

Co-author of the report, Dr Richard Fletcher, of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford, said: "The popularity of MailOnline with younger readers is due to an editorial approach focussed on entertainment and celebrity—very different in character from the more conservative stance taken in print."

Changes over time

Although most newspapers are attracting more attention from younger readers via their [print editions](#) than via their online channels, the young are spending less time with [newspaper](#) brands than they used to, even though digital distribution has made access easier and cheaper.



Credit: City University London

The report compares the time spent with newspapers in 2016 against the time spent at the turn of the millennium. Overall there has been a 40 per cent drop, with much larger falls in the attention coming from younger (-64 per cent) and middle-aged (-57 per cent) readers than from the

older (-14 per cent) audience segment.

Some brands 'more visible' than in 1999/2000

However, some newspaper brands have bucked this downward trend in visibility. The report found that the total time spent with the Guardian and the London Evening Standard by their British audiences had actually increased since the turn of the millennium, by 19 per cent and 17 per cent, respectively.

In the case of the Guardian, the report credits the gain to the title's relatively successful online editions, which have attracted more attention than has been lost from declines in its print readership, and to Brexit and Trump 'bumps' in print readership in 2016. In the Standard's case, becoming a freesheet in 2009 boosted readership—and, as a result, time spent with the brand.

The report calculated the total [time](#) spent with eight UK newspaper brands (The Mail, Mirror, The Sun, Star, Standard, The Telegraph, The Guardian, and The Times) by their British [print](#) and online (PC and mobile) audiences (aged 18 and over) using data from the National Readership Survey and comScore.

Titled "Has Digital Distribution Rejuvenated Readership? Revisiting the Age Demographics of Newspaper Consumption," the report was authored by Professor Neil Thurman of City, University of London and LMU Munich and Dr Richard Fletcher of the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at the University of Oxford.

The [report](#) is published in the international peer-reviewed journal *Journalism Studies*.

More information: Neil Thurman et al. Has Digital Distribution

Rejuvenated Readership?, *Journalism Studies* (2017). [DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2017.1397532](https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2017.1397532) Neil Thurman et al. Has Digital Distribution Rejuvenated Readership?, *Journalism Studies* (2017). [DOI: 10.1080/1461670X.2017.1397532](https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2017.1397532)

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