

# Taking a break from news: A five-nation study of news avoidance in the digital era

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News avoidance is a topical phenomenon. Now amidst the distressing news from the war in Ukraine, many people may wish to skip news altogether or at least temporarily.

A recent research article examines news avoidance in the rapidly changing media environment. The article draws on interviews with nearly 500 media consumers in Finland, Argentine, Israel, Japan, and the United States.

The article offers a comprehensive and nuanced picture of the reasons and practices of news avoidance in different cultural contexts. An essential argument is that news avoidance is not attributable to personal reasons only, but it occurs also as part of temporal and sociocultural contexts. The article distinguishes between two types of factors influencing news avoidance: cognitive and emotional. In [cognitive factors](#), country-specific and contextual points are highlighted, whereas the emotional factors of news avoidance are shared by audiences in different countries.

An example of cognitive avoidance of news concerns a particular period and developments associated with Donald Trump's presidency. In the United States, in particular, but also in Finland, Trump's continual presence in the news made people avoid the news, because they were fed up with hearing about Trump. In Israel, then again, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu caused similar reactions.

An essential point in cognitive news avoidance is that the break from news is not necessarily permanent because it is strongly linked to a particular person, period of time, or course of events. As for current phenomena, the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine can be assumed to make people tired with news and thereby cause cognitive news avoidance.

Emotional news avoidance, in turn, is related to the permanent properties of news, mainly their negative character. News items tend to deal with unpleasant and unfortunate things, such as severe accidents, wars, [terrorist attacks](#), and natural catastrophes.

Instead of mere news fatigue, emotional news avoidance expresses different emotions and feelings such as fear, sadness, and disgust. Therefore, emotional news avoidance has often to do with [self-protection](#), a desire to avoid heavy emotional strain. In the study, emotional news avoidance was highlighted especially among [young adults](#) (18- to 34-year-olds). With respect to the war in Ukraine, [news avoidance](#) will probably be both cognitive and emotional.

The article, "Taking a Break from News: A Five-nation Study of News Avoidance in the Digital Era," was published in *Digital Journalism*.

**More information:** Mikko Villi et al, Taking a Break from News: A Five-nation Study of News Avoidance in the Digital Era, *Digital Journalism* (2021). [DOI: 10.1080/21670811.2021.1904266](https://doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2021.1904266)

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