

## Decline of Newspapers: Age drives views on the impacts of shrinking newsrooms

*Subscribers and Canadians over 55 most sympathetic to newspapers' struggles*

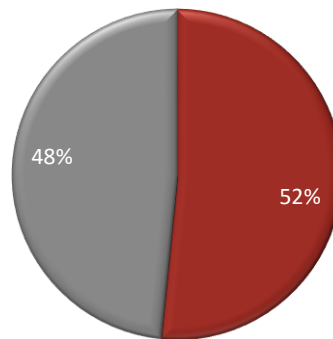
**April 29, 2016** – As editions of Canada's newspapers grow thinner and thinner – a sign of their own industry's steady decline, Canadians are divided – mostly along generational lines – over whether the news vacuum left by shrinking papers is a serious problem for Canada, or one that will be resolved as new, online media outlets pick up the slack.

The latest self-commissioned public opinion poll from the Angus Reid Institute does suggest more consensus when it comes to the loss of investigative journalism, small-town reporting, and accountability for powerful interests. Respondents are twice as likely to say these effects of newspaper decline are "very serious" as not.

### Key Findings:

- Slightly more than half of all Canadians (52%) say the decline of newspapers in this country "is a serious problem"
- This belief is strongest among the older generation (those ages 55 and older), almost two-thirds (64%) of whom view the industry's struggles as significant. Among younger respondents, fewer than half say the decline "is a serious problem"
- More than three-in-five Canadians (62%) have subscribed to a newspaper – either in print or online – at some point in their lives, but this total varies wildly by age, with older respondents much more likely to have subscribed, and younger ones much less so

### Which of these perspectives is closer to your own?



- The decline of newspapers is a serious problem
- The decline of newspapers is NOT a serious problem

### METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from March 28 – 31, 2016, among a representative randomized sample of 1,522 Canadian adults who are members of the [Angus Reid Forum](#). For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2.5 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

### CONTACT:

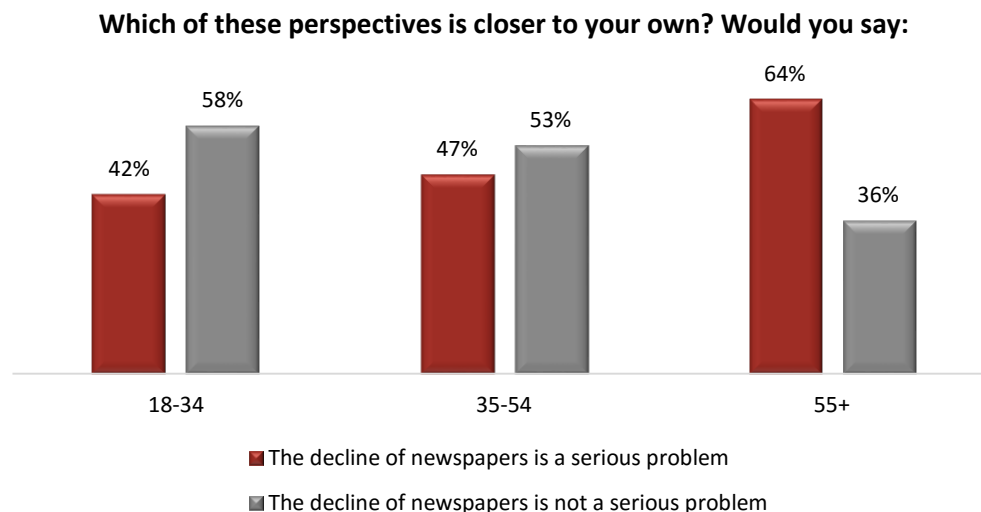
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## Generations split on seriousness

So far, 2016 may arguably be described as a dismal year for the newspaper business in Canada. It began on January 1, with Montreal's La Presse [officially ending its weekday print edition](#). Later that month, Postmedia [announced 90 layoffs and the merging of newsrooms](#) in several cities. This was soon followed by the shuttering of the [Guelph Mercury](#) and the [Nanaimo Daily News](#).

On the surface, Canadians are split down the middle on whether these struggles represent a serious problem for Canada, with 52 per cent saying they are and the rest (48%) saying they aren't.

Upon closer inspection, however, there is a significant generational divide. Older Canadians (those ages 55 and older), many of whom draw upon a lifetime of ritualistically thumbing through their morning papers, are more concerned about the deterioration of the newspaper industry than younger generations. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of the 55 and over group say this is a serious issue, compared to less than half of those in the two younger age cohorts:



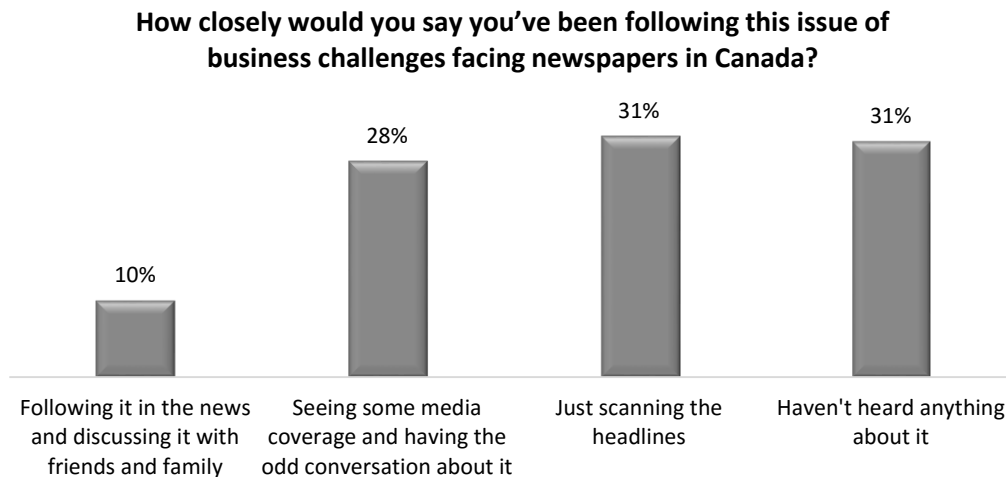
Women are also more likely to identify newspapers' struggles as "a serious problem," (56% do so, compared to 47% of men), and there are regional divides on this question as well.

Majorities in the most populous provinces – Ontario, Quebec, and British Columbia – and in Atlantic Canada see this issue as a serious one, while majorities on the Prairies take the opposite view ([see comprehensive tables for greater detail](#)).

## Most Canadians aren't following newspapers' decline

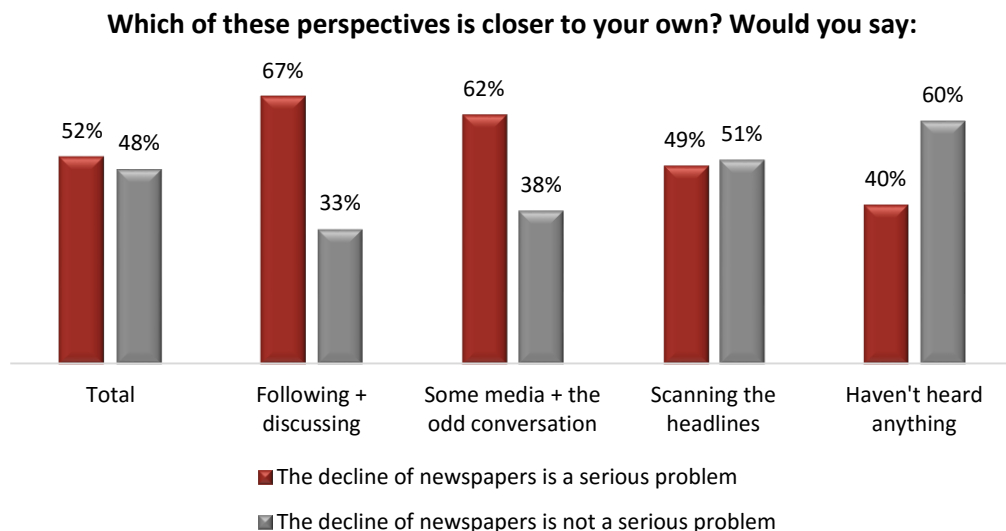
All of the aforementioned closures and contractions have been widely reported, both in newspapers themselves and in other media, but this poll finds audiences have mostly tuned these stories out.

Just one-in-ten Canadians (10%) say they are following news of the decline of newspapers and discussing it with friends and family. Roughly three times as many (28%) say they are “just scanning the headlines” or “haven’t heard anything about it,” as seen in the following graph:



It is those who are “tuned out” who largely drive ambivalence about the seriousness – or in their eyes, the lack thereof – when it comes to the decline of the industry.

Overall, slightly more than half (52%) say “the decline of newspapers is a serious problem,” while 48 per cent say it isn’t. Among those following the issue most closely, however, concern rises to roughly two-in-three (67%), as seen in the following graph:



## News and consequences

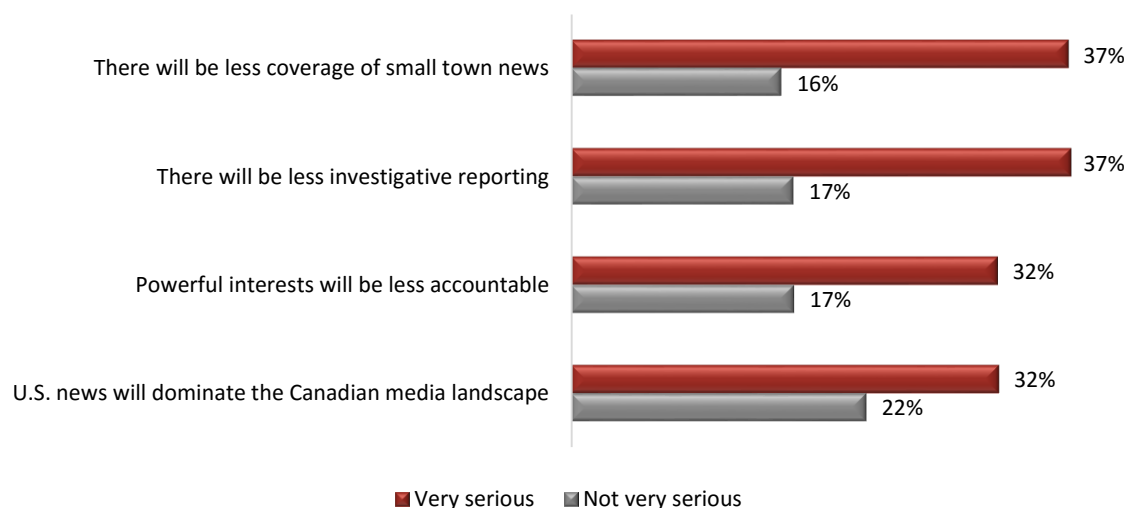
While newspapers aren't the only media organizations that produce journalism, they have historically been among the best-resourced, with large contingents of reporters staffing not only local newsrooms, but provincial and federal capital bureaus and – at the largest papers – overseas correspondents.

Many of these resources have disappeared over the last decade and a half. In the United States, the number of newspaper employees decreased from roughly 54,700 in 2003 to 32,900 in 2015, [according to the American Society of News Editors](#), a decline of nearly 40 per cent. In Canada, the industry's struggles [have taken a similar toll](#) on staffing.

The death of newspapers, should it happen, would [hardly be the death of journalism](#). That said, some see the diminished footprint of printed news as a significant threat to journalism's [role in the nation's democracy](#), and still others [have called for government intervention](#) to preserve the industry.

Many Canadians share this concern. Asked to weigh in on four potential consequences of the decline of newspapers, most express some degree of belief that these are serious issues:

### Some people say the following consequences will result from the decline of Canadian newspapers. How serious would you say each one is?

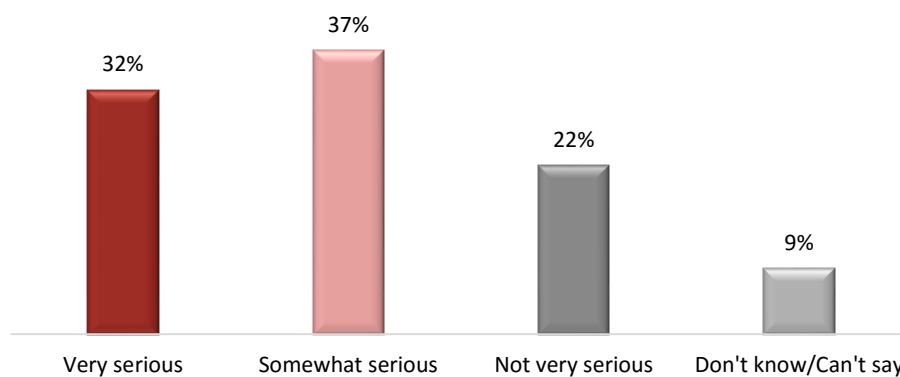


### U.S. news will dominate:

As [previous ARI polling has shown](#), Canadians are protective of their domestic media landscape, with 70 per cent saying Canada's culture needs government support – including Canadian content policies – to survive.

For many, this concern extends to the news media, with one-in-three respondents (32%) saying fears that the death of newspapers, if it happened, would lead to U.S. stories dominating Canadian news are “very serious,” though it should be noted that more respondents say this concern is “not very serious” than say the same of any of the other three items canvassed:

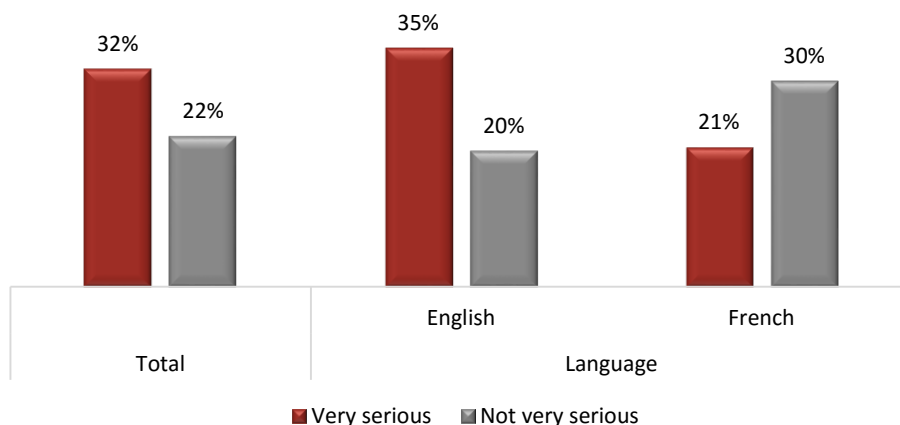
### U.S. news will dominate the Canadian media landscape



Again, there is a split in concern between Ontario and Quebec. Ontarians are more likely to say this issue is “very serious” (40% do), while Quebecers – with their distinct language and culture – are not particularly concerned about American dominance (28% say this concern is “not very serious,” compared to 21% who do).

Language is the key divider here, with Francophone respondents feeling particularly nonplussed by the thought of U.S. news dominating Canadian media (see summary tables at the end of this release):

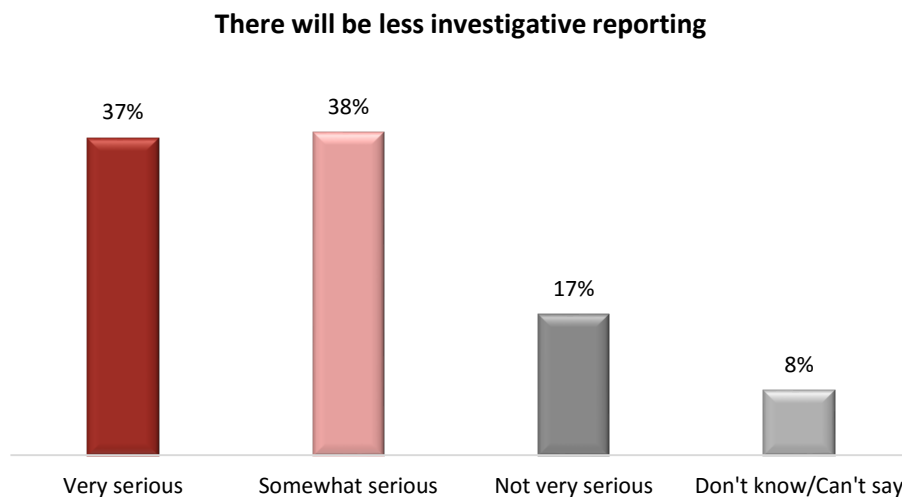
### U.S. news will dominate the Canadian media landscape



## Less investigative reporting:

Investigative reporting is [often held up](#) as a primary victim of the contraction of the newspaper industry because it takes a lot of time and money to do. And though it is often [the stuff of awards](#), the risk of an expensive investigation falling apart outweighs the reward of public acclaim for many publications.

Canadians view this as a serious issue, as seen in the following graph:



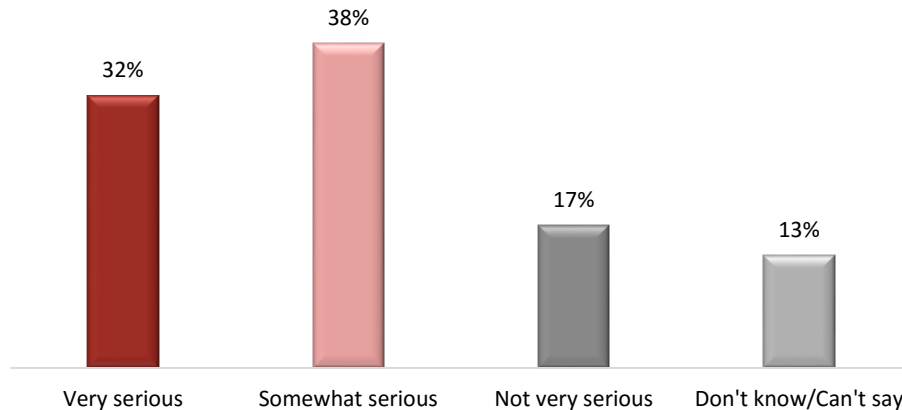
This potential consequence of the decline of newspapers is the only one on which responses differ significantly by education level. Those Canadians with a university degree or higher are considerably more likely than other education groups to see a loss of investigative reporting as a “very serious” issue (46% do so, [see comprehensive tables](#)).

## Powerful interests less accountable:

One of journalism’s primary functions in Western democracy is to serve as [the so-called “Fourth Estate”](#) – the last check on the most powerful groups in society, including governments.

Canadians are slightly less concerned about the loss of newspapers hurting journalism’s ability to hold powerful interests to account than they are about investigative reporting or small-town news – two things newspapers tend to do more of than other media outlets.

## Powerful interests will be less accountable



As seen in the preceding graph, Canadians are more uncertain about this potential effect of the decline of newspapers than the previous two.

On this issue, residents of Ontario – the seat of many of Canada’s most powerful interests – are especially likely to say this concern is “very serious” (38% do so). Interestingly, Quebec residents take the opposite view, with almost as many saying it’s “not very serious” (21%) as saying it is (24%).

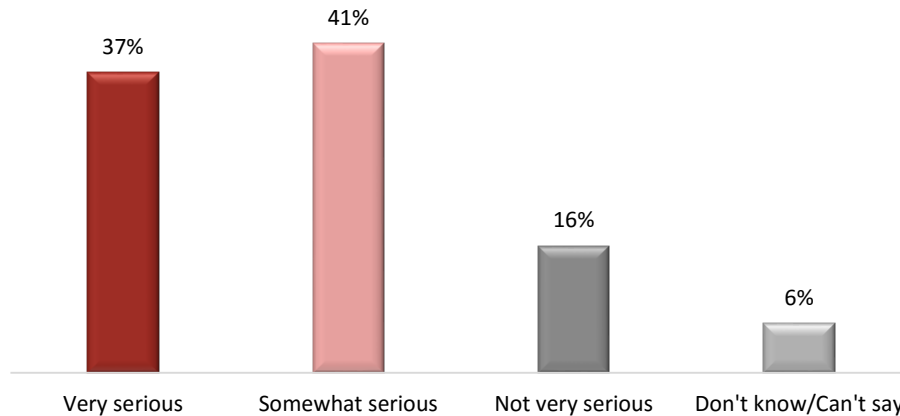
### Less coverage of small town news:

As might be expected, the same demographic groups that are more likely to describe the troubles facing newspapers as “a serious problem” are also more likely to say each specific potential consequence of these troubles is “very serious.”

In the case of a loss of small-town news, for example, nearly half of the 55-plus age group (47%) says this potential result of newspapers’ decline is “very serious,” while roughly one-in-three of each other age group say the same ([see comprehensive tables](#)).

Overall results on this question are seen in the graph that follows:

## There will be less coverage of small town news



Regionally, Ontarians (40%) and Atlantic Canadians (43%) are most likely to say this concern is “very serious,” a finding that could be related to the preponderance of smaller settlements in each area.

That said, there are only minor differences in responses to this question by community type. Big city residents are just as likely as rural Canadians to say the loss of small town news coverage is a very serious threat, though they’re less likely to say it’s “somewhat serious” (see summary tables at the end of this release).

### **Generational differences in newspaper use**

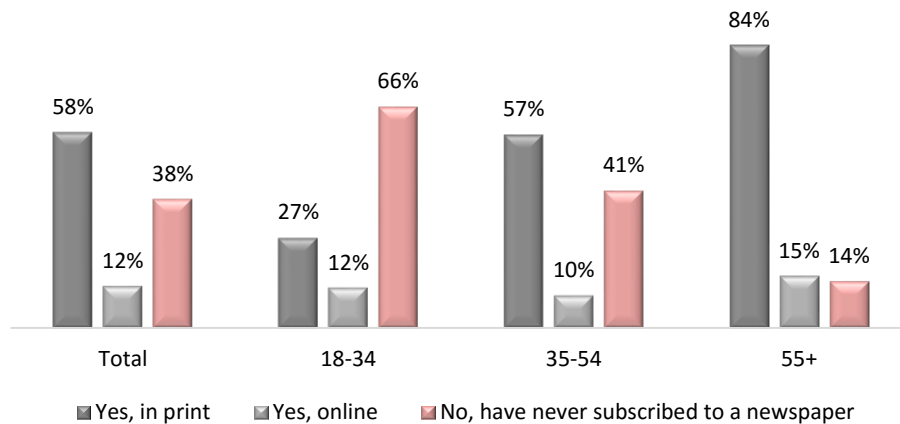
Most Canadians (62%) have subscribed to a newspaper – whether in print or online – at some point in their lives. But, as with so many of the questions asked in this survey, there is a wide gulf in responses between the oldest and youngest generations.

Fully 86 per cent of Canadians aged 55 and older have subscribed to a newspaper (84% in print), while roughly one-in-three (34%) of those ages 18 – 34 say the same (27% in print).

As seen in the following graph, the inverse is also true. Two-thirds of younger Canadians (66%) have never subscribed to a newspaper, either in print or online:



## Have you ever subscribed to a newspaper?

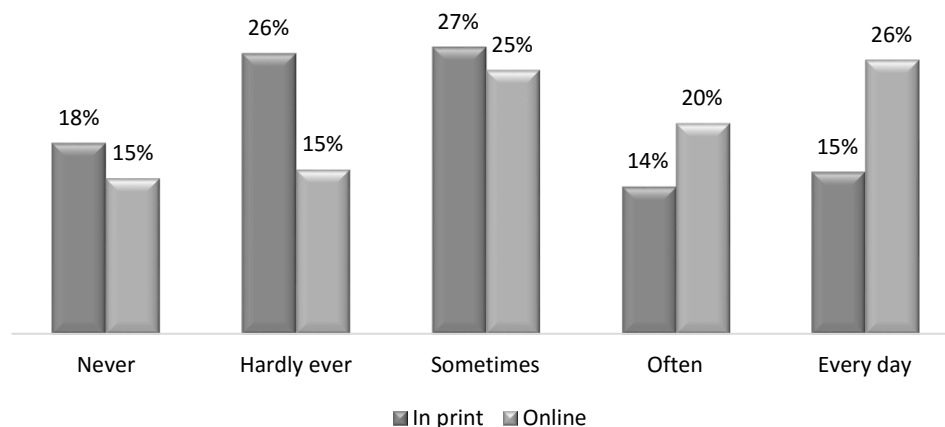


As the graph indicates, online subscriptions – so often pitched as the future of newspapers – haven't taken off with any particular age group.

Just one-in-ten Canadians (12%) have subscribed to a newspaper online, and this number includes many whose subscription experience includes both print and digital. The number of Canadians who have subscribed to a newspaper online, but *never had a print subscription*, is just 4 per cent.

The lack of digital-specific subscriptions doesn't mean Canadians aren't reading newspapers online, however. Asked a separate question about how often they read a daily newspaper, more Canadians say they read one "often" or "every day" online than in print, as seen in the following graph:

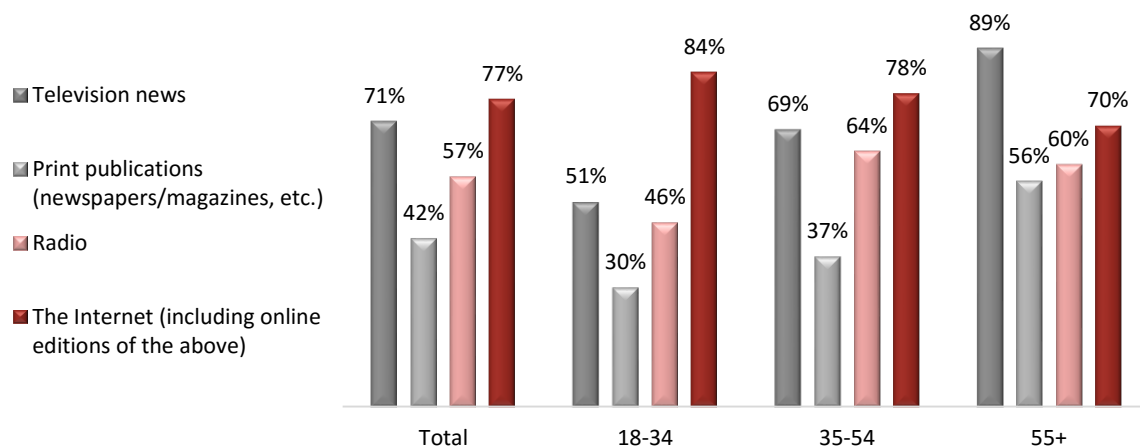
## And, specifically, how often do you read a daily newspaper?



Likewise, it can't be said that young Canadians don't read newspapers – even though most of them have never subscribed. Nearly half (48%) of all Canadians aged 18 – 34 say they read a newspaper online either “often” (26%) or “every day” (22%), though it should be noted that young Canadians are less likely than the general population to read newspapers in print ([see comprehensive tables](#)).

This preference for the Internet extends to the news consumption habits of younger Canadians more generally. Asked where they get their news on a typical weekday, at least seven-in-ten Canadians of each age group say they turn to the Internet (including online versions of newspapers, television, and radio stations). Among the 18 – 34 crowd, this number rises to 84 per cent:

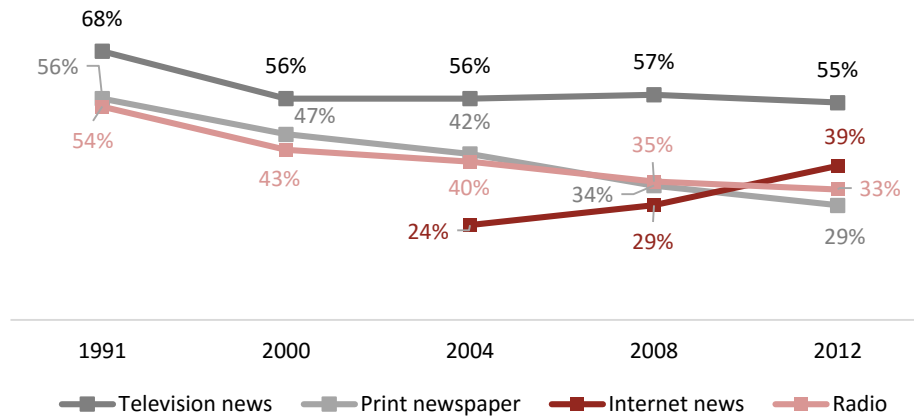
**Thinking about a typical weekday, do you get any news from any of the following**



The overall results of this question follow a pattern similar to the most recent U.S. [data from Pew Research](#), which finds Americans most likely to get news from television, followed by the Internet, radio, and print newspapers, in that order.

Pew's results going back to 1991 show the growth of the Internet as a news source in recent years, and a steady decline in the popularity of print:

### Where did you get your news yesterday? Source: Pew Research

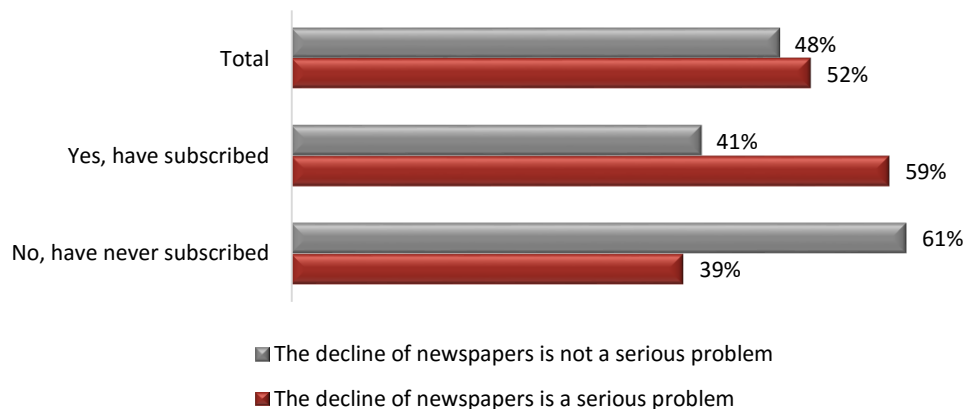


### Personal experience with newspapers shapes opinion on their decline

Perhaps unsurprisingly, 72% of Canadians who get their news from a print publication on a typical weekday are largely convinced that the decline of newspapers is a serious problem. This compares to half (50%) of those who get their news from the Internet.

Similar concern exists among a majority (59%) of those who have been newspaper subscribers at some point in their lives, while roughly the same percentage of non-subscribers (61%) take the opposite position:

### Have you ever subscribed to a newspaper?



These two groups – those who read a paper in print on a typical weekday and those who have subscribed to one at some point – are also more likely to see each potential consequence of the decline of newspapers as “very serious,” and to say they’ve been following the issue in the news and discussing it with friends and family.

*The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research organization established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.*

**Summary tables follow. For detailed results by region, age, gender, education, and other demographics, [click here](#).**

Which of these perspectives is closer to your own? Would you say:					
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1522)	Awareness of the issue			
		Following it in the news and discussing it with friends and family (151)	Seeing some media coverage and having the odd conversation about it (428)	Just scanning the headlines (477)	Haven't heard anything (466)
The decline of newspapers is a serious problem	52%	67%	62%	49%	40%
The decline of newspapers is not a serious problem	48%	33%	38%	51%	60%

**Some people say the following consequences will result from the decline of newspapers. For each one, would you say concerns about it are serious or not?  
“There will be less coverage of small town news”**

(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1522)	Community size			
		Van/TO/Mtl (497)	Mid-sized cities (301)	Rest of Urban Canada (515)	Rural Canada (209)
Very serious	37%	38%	34%	38%	39%
Somewhat serious	41%	42%	36%	40%	47%
Not very serious	16%	14%	21%	17%	11%
Don't know/Can't say	6%	7%	8%	6%	3%

**Some people say the following consequences will result from the decline of newspapers. For each one, would you say concerns about it are serious or not?  
“U.S. news will dominate the Canadian media landscape”**

(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1522)	Language	
		English (497)	French (301)
Very serious	32%	35%	21%
Somewhat serious	37%	37%	40%
Not very serious	22%	20%	30%
Don't know/Can't say	9%	8%	9%

Which of these perspectives is closer to your own? Would you say:					
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1522)	News consumption on a typical weekday			
		Television (1086)	Print Publications (639)	Radio (874)	The Internet (1169)
The decline of newspapers is a serious problem	52%	57%	72%	56%	50%
The decline of newspapers is not a serious problem	48%	43%	28%	44%	50%

Which of these perspectives is closer to your own? Would you say:					
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1522)	Ever subscribed to a newspaper			
		Yes, in print (883)	Yes, online (186)	Yes (Net) (941)	No, never (581)
The decline of newspapers is a serious problem	52%	59%	63%	59%	39%
The decline of newspapers is not a serious problem	48%	41%	37%	41%	61%

Some people say the following consequences will result from the decline of newspapers. For each one, would you say concerns about it are serious or not?					
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1522)	News consumption on a typical weekday			
		Television (1086)	Print Publications (639)	Radio (874)	The Internet (1169)
<b>Powerful interests will be less accountable</b>					
Very serious	32%	34%	43%	36%	33%
Somewhat serious	38%	39%	39%	39%	37%
Not very serious	17%	15%	9%	15%	18%
Don't know/Can't say	13%	12%	9%	11%	11%
<b>There will be less investigative reporting</b>					
Very serious	37%	40%	49%	43%	39%
Somewhat serious	38%	39%	37%	38%	36%
Not very serious	17%	14%	9%	14%	18%
Don't know/Can't say	8%	7%	5%	6%	6%
<b>There will be less coverage of small town news</b>					
Very serious	37%	42%	51%	42%	38%
Somewhat serious	41%	40%	38%	40%	41%
Not very serious	16%	13%	8%	14%	17%
Don't know/Can't say	6%	5%	3%	5%	5%
<b>U.S. news will dominate the Canadian media landscape</b>					
Very serious	32%	34%	39%	35%	33%
Somewhat serious	37%	37%	39%	40%	35%
Not very serious	22%	21%	16%	19%	25%
Don't know/Can't say	9%	8%	6%	6%	7%

Some people say the following consequences will result from the decline of newspapers. For each one, would you say concerns about it are serious or not?					
(weighted sample sizes)	Total (1522)	Ever subscribed to a newspaper			
		Yes, in print (883)	Yes, online (186)	Yes (Net) (941)	No, never (581)
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Very serious	32%	38%	37%	38%	23%
Somewhat serious	38%	36%	39%	37%	40%
Not very serious	17%	16%	18%	15%	19%
Don't know/Can't say	13%	10%	6%	10%	18%
<b>There will be less investigative reporting</b>					
Very serious	37%	44%	43%	43%	28%
Somewhat serious	38%	36%	38%	36%	41%
Not very serious	17%	15%	14%	15%	20%
Don't know/Can't say	8%	5%	4%	5%	12%
<b>There will be less coverage of small town news</b>					
Very serious	37%	43%	41%	42%	29%
Somewhat serious	41%	40%	44%	41%	41%
Not very serious	16%	14%	9%	13%	20%
Don't know/Can't say	6%	4%	6%	4%	10%
<b>U.S. news will dominate the Canadian media landscape</b>					
Very serious	32%	36%	31%	36%	26%
Somewhat serious	37%	36%	43%	37%	37%
Not very serious	22%	21%	19%	21%	24%
Don't know/Can't say	9%	6%	7%	6%	13%