



National Survey: The Personal News Cycle: How Americans Get their News

- First-of-its-kind survey reveals that the nature of the news itself—the topic and speed of the story—largely determines where people go to learn about events and the path they take to get there
- Findings debunk conventional wisdom that ideology or age shape news consumption
- Remarkably high numbers of Americans are daily consumers of news
- Newspapers, whether print or online, draw a wide audience across a broad range of topics

Chicago, March 17, 2014—Toppling some stereotypes about how people get news in the digital age, a major new survey reveals that the nature of the news itself—the topic and speed of the story—rather than the demographics of the audience largely determines where people go to learn about events and the path they take to get there. The findings suggest that conventional wisdom that media consumption is shaped by age or ideology is overstated and that some long-held beliefs about people relying on a few primary sources for their news are now obsolete.

The survey, titled “The Personal News Cycle,” was released today by the Media Insight Project, an initiative of the [American Press Institute](#) and The [Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#).

“People across generations are interested in all kinds of news, and they use a mix of media to learn about them,” said Tom Rosenstiel, executive director of the American Press Institute. “They are also much more self-directed and conscious in their media consumption than many people think. Across age groups, people not only know who is reporting the news, they prefer hearing the news directly from news organizations than indirect sources.”

The findings challenge the notion that one generation depends on print or television to get their news while another relies on the web and their cell phones. More than six in ten American adults each week get news from television, radio, print, computers or smartphones. The average adult uses four types of media every week, numbers that vary only slightly by age group.

The data also find that where people go for news depends on the topic of the story—whether it is sports or science, politics or weather, health or arts—and on the nature of the story—fast breaking news vs. slower moving trends. People tend to seek out specialized reporting sources for some topics, newspaper media for others, local TV for others and cable for still more.

Regardless of platform, people across age groups are avid consumers of news. Three quarters of Americans get news at least daily, including six out of ten adults under 30. And a solid majority of adults, 60 percent, believe it is easier to get news today than five years ago.

The unique design of the survey gave researchers the ability go well beyond traditional studies of media consumption, most designed in the 1960s and 1970s when television was emerging but the Internet and other technologies had not been invented. The responses allow a detailed look at how people obtain news and explore topics more deeply, and what media they use to follow different types of stories.

“This survey provides information that goes well beyond the media platform a person uses,” said Trevor Tompson, director of the AP-NORC Center. “We learned, for example, whether or not people distinguish between the technology they are using and the original source of the news they are consuming, if they track breaking news differently from slower moving topics, and even what they do if they want to learn more.”

Overall, the survey findings provide a baseline of understanding about the ways in which people obtain their news, their news habits, the amount of attention they pay to news, the demographics of news consumers and the ever-shifting terrain of news technology.

Other findings of the survey include:

- The majority of Americans, across generations, combine a mix of sources and technologies to get their news each week. The technology used is shaped by the nature of the news more than age.
- Most Americans use many media devices to get their news, with television (87 percent) followed by computer (69 percent), radio (65 percent), print (61 percent), cellphone (56 percent) and tablet (29 percent). They also seek out many different reporting sources, with a majority of Americans each week, both in legacy format and digitally, getting news from local TV (82 percent), network TV (73 percent), newspaper media (66 percent), 24-hour cable (62 percent) or radio (56 percent). Age has only limited impact on these numbers.
- Half of Americans say they have no preferred device for obtaining news, contrasting with the common assumption that news habits are ingrained and limited to a few devices. Instead, people seem to seek out the technology that is most convenient or suitable to the news they are seeking.

- There is no evidence that the rapid growth of mobile technology is associated with less news consumption. Mobile news consumers are more likely to say they enjoy keeping up with the news and that it's easier to keep up than it was five years ago.
- Given 15 main topics such as weather, local news, sports, and social issues, people in high numbers turn to newspapers, whether print or online, for 11 of the 15. Cable news is the primary source for four of the 15: politics, international news, business and the economy and social issues.
- There are only small differences across age, political party, gender or socioeconomic status in the news topics people follow.

About the survey:

This nationally representative survey of the 50 states and the District of Columbia was conducted on telephone with 1,492 adults ages 18 and older, with 1,006 respondents on landlines and 486 on cellphones. The overall margin of error was +/- 3.6 percent.

Additional information, including the survey report and the survey's complete topline findings can be found on www.Medialnsight.org.

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[The American Press Institute](#) conducts research, training, convenes thought leaders and creates tools to help chart a path ahead for journalism in the 21st century. . Founded in 1946, it is an educational non-advocacy 501(c)3 nonprofit organization affiliated with the Newspaper Association of America.

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