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# News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2016

BY *Jeffrey Gottfried and Elisa Shearer*

**FOR MEDIA OR OTHER INQUIRIES:**

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## News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2016

A majority of U.S. adults – 62% – get news on social media, and 18% do so often, according to a new survey by Pew Research Center, conducted in association with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. In 2012, based on a slightly different question, 49% of U.S. adults reported seeing news on social media.<sup>1</sup>

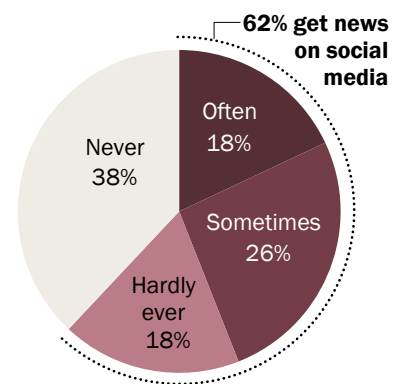
But which social media sites have the largest portion of users getting news there? How many get news on multiple social media sites? And to what degree are these news consumers seeking online news out versus happening upon it while doing other things?

As part of an ongoing examination of [social media and news](#), Pew Research Center analyzed the scope and characteristics of social media news consumers across nine social networking sites. This study is based on a survey conducted Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016, with 4,654 members of Pew Research Center’s American Trends Panel.

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### About 6-in-10 Americans get news from social media

*% of U.S. adults who get news on a social networking site ...*



Source: Survey conducted Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.  
“News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2016”

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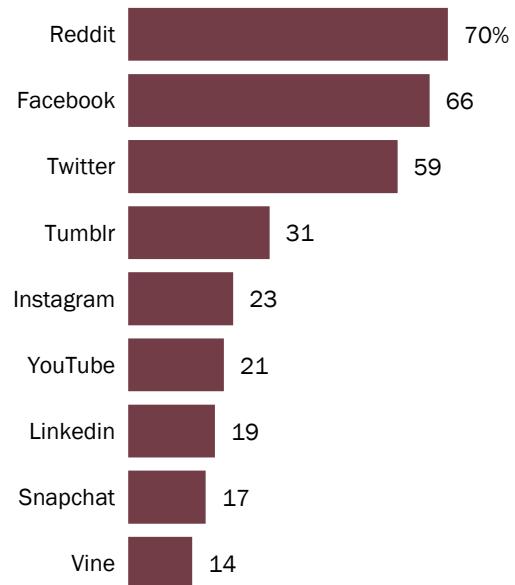
<sup>1</sup> In 2012, this was asked over the phone and asked about “seeing” news rather than “getting” news. Additionally, this figure combines items about news on social media generally and news specifically on Twitter.

News plays a varying role across the social networking sites studied.<sup>2</sup> Two-thirds of Facebook users (66%) get news on the site, nearly six-in-ten Twitter users (59%) get news on Twitter, and seven-in-ten Reddit users get news on that platform. On Tumblr, the figure sits at 31%, while for the other five social networking sites it is true of only about one-fifth or less of their user bases.

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### Reddit, Facebook and Twitter users most likely to get news on each site

*% of each social networking sites' users who get news on the site*



Source: Survey conducted Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.  
"News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2016"

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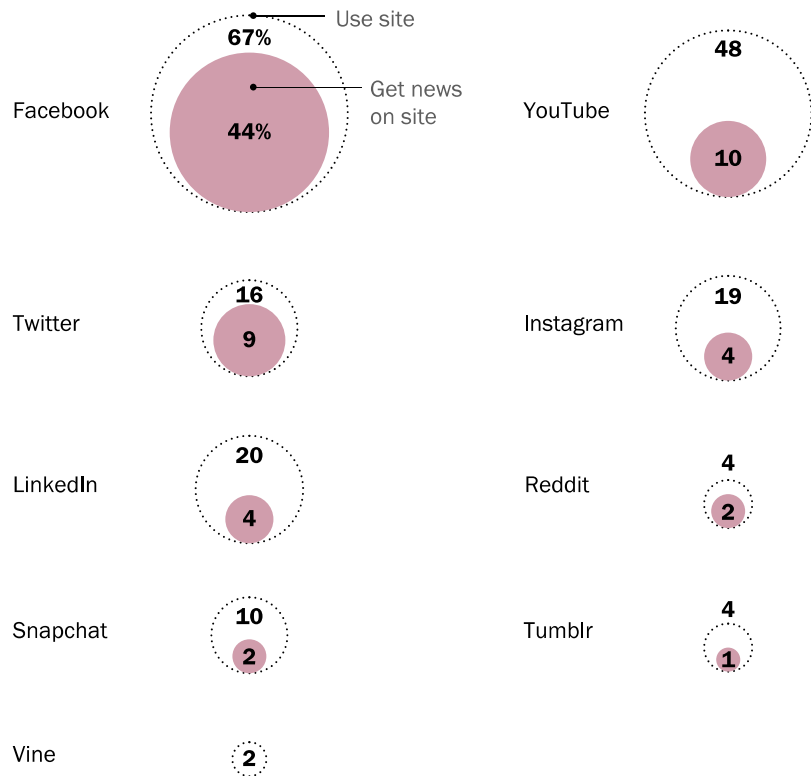
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<sup>2</sup> News consumers for each social networking website are defined as those who answered that they "ever get news or news headlines" on each site. News is defined as "information about events and issues that involve more than just your friends or family."

It is also useful to see how, when combined with the sites' total reach, the proportion of users who gets news on each site translates to U.S. adults overall. Facebook is by far the largest social networking site, reaching 67% of U.S. adults. The two-thirds of Facebook users who get news there, then, amount to 44% of the general population. YouTube has the next greatest reach in terms of general usage, at 48% of U.S. adults. But only about a fifth of its users get news there, which amounts to 10% of the adult population. That puts it on par with Twitter, which has a smaller user base (16% of U.S. adults) but a larger portion getting news there.

## Social media news use: Facebook leads the pack

*% of U.S. adults who ...*



Source: Survey conducted Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.  
 "News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2016"

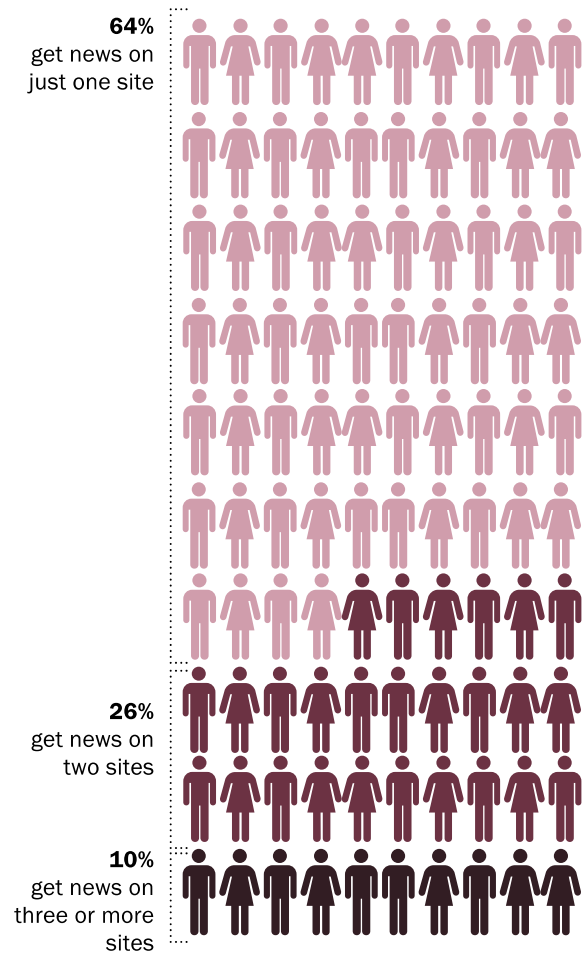
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## The audience overlap

To what extent do the various news audiences on social media overlap? Of those who get news on at least one of the sites, a majority (64%) get news on just one – most commonly Facebook. About a quarter (26%) get news on two of those sites. Just one-in-ten get news on three or more.

### Most social media news consumers only get news on one site

*% of news users of at least one social media site who ...*



Source: Survey conducted Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.  
 “News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2016”

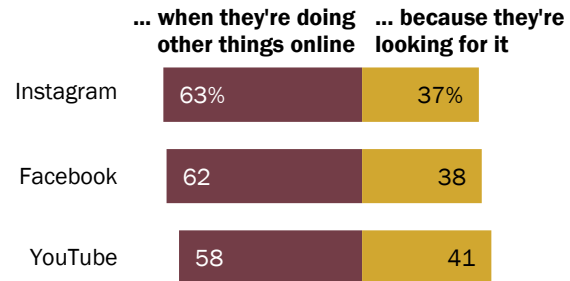
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## Seeking out news online

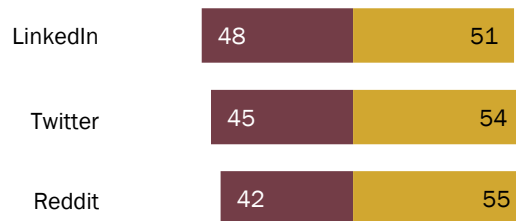
Differences also emerge in how active or passive each group of news users is in their online news habits more generally. YouTube, Facebook and Instagram news users are more likely to get their news online mostly by chance, when they are online doing other things. Alternatively, the portion of Reddit, Twitter and LinkedIn news users who seek out news online is roughly similar to the portion that happen upon it.<sup>3</sup>

### Instagram, Facebook and YouTube news users most likely to happen upon news online

*% of news users of each site who mostly get news online ...*



### But LinkedIn, Twitter and Reddit news users are more evenly divided between news seekers and non-seekers



Note: Sample sizes for Vine, Tumblr and Snapchat are too small to include in this analysis.

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.  
"News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2016"

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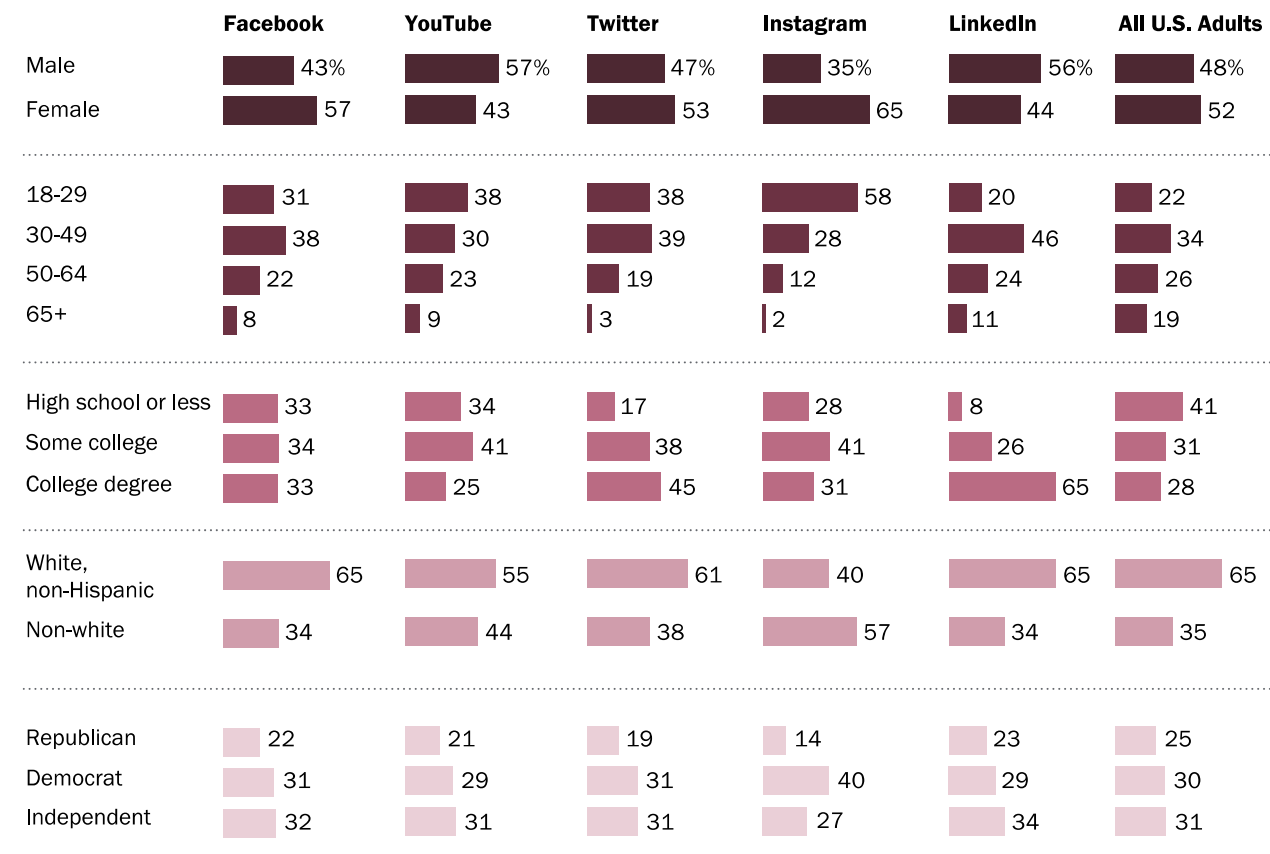
<sup>3</sup> While the portion of Reddit news users who get news online because they are looking for it is 13 percentage points higher than the portion of those users that get news while doing other things online, these numbers are not statistically different due to the small number of Reddit news users in the sample.

## The demographics of social media news consumers

A look at the demographic characteristics of news consumers on the five social networking sites with the biggest news audiences shows that, while there is some crossover, each site appeals to a somewhat different group. Instagram news consumers stand out from other groups as more likely to be non-white, young and, for all but Facebook, female. LinkedIn news consumers are more likely to have a college degree than news users of the other four platforms; Twitter news users are the second most likely. The demographics of other sites can be found in the [Appendix](#).

### Demographic profile of social networking site news users

*% of news users of each site who are ...*



Note: "All U.S. Adults" figures based on non-institutionalized, 18 and older U.S. adults.

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016. Pew Research Center analysis of 2014 American Community Survey (IPUMS). "News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2016"

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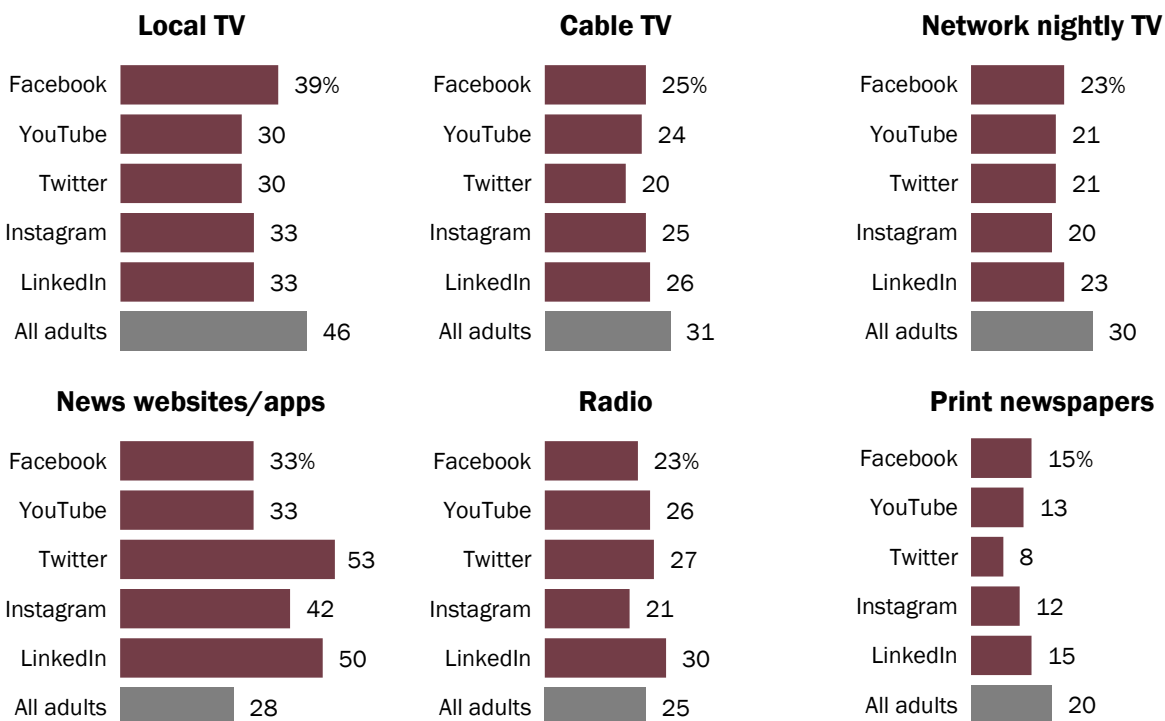


## Social news consumers and other news platforms

Social media news consumers still get news from a variety of other sources and to a fairly consistent degree across sites. For example, across the five sites with the biggest news audiences, roughly two-in-ten news users of each also get news from nightly network television news; about three-in-ten turn to local TV. One area that saw greater variation was news websites and apps. Roughly half of Twitter and LinkedIn news consumers also get news from news websites and apps, while that is true of one-third of Facebook and YouTube news users.

### Social media news consumers access news on a number of other platforms

*% of news users of each site who often get news from ...*



Source: Survey conducted Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.  
 "News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2016"

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## Changes over time

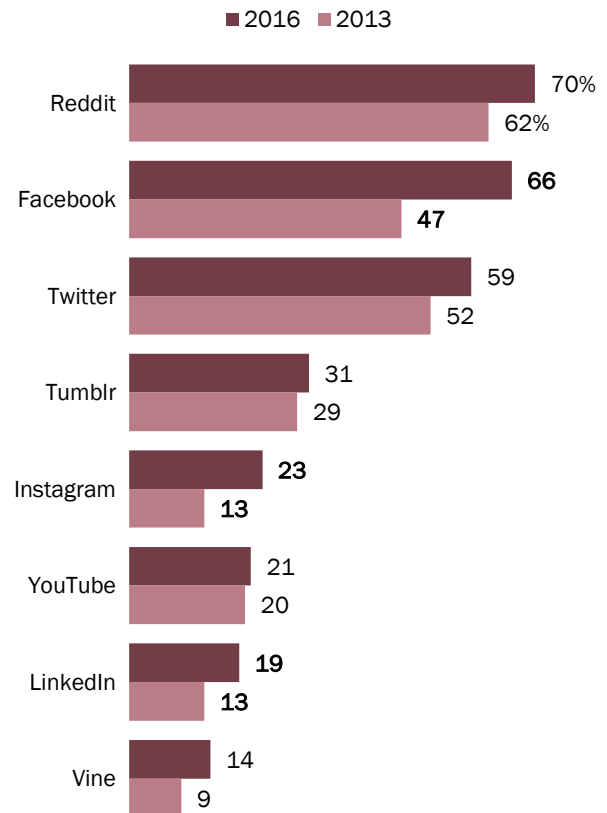
This report is an update to a 2013 report, with the addition of Snapchat and the removal of three sites: Pinterest, which has been shown to have a small portion of users [who use it for news](#); Myspace, which has largely [transitioned to a music site](#); and Google+, which through its [recent transformations is being phased out as a social networking site](#). For the sites analyzed in both 2013 and 2016, a few significant differences emerge.

Of the sites we tracked since 2013, three of eight show an increase in the portion of users who get news there: Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.<sup>4</sup>

The full 2013-2016 trends for usage and demographics can be found in the [Appendix](#).

### Growth in use of social media for news

*% of users of each social networking site who get news there*



Note: Statistically significant differences in **bold**.  
Source: Survey conducted Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.  
“News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2016”

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<sup>4</sup> Twitter’s difference between 2013 and 2016 approaches statistical significance, but does not reach significance with traditional standards.

## Acknowledgments

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This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals.

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## Methodology

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults living in households. Respondents who self-identify as internet users and who provided an email address participate in the panel via monthly self-administered web surveys, and those who do not use the internet or decline to provide an email address participate via the mail. The panel is being managed by Abt SRBI.

Data in this report are drawn from the January wave of the panel, conducted Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016, among 4,654 respondents (4,339 by web and 315 by mail). The January wave of the panel was conducted by Pew Research Center in association with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Panelists who have access to the internet but take surveys by mail were not sampled in this wave (i.e. mail respondents to this wave are all non-Internet users). The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 4,654 respondents is plus or minus 2.4 percentage points.

Members of the American Trends Panel were recruited from two large, national landline and cellphone random-digit-dial (RDD) surveys conducted in English and Spanish. At the end of each survey, respondents were invited to join the panel. The first group of panelists was recruited from the 2014 Political Polarization and Typology Survey, conducted Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014. Of the 10,013 adults interviewed, 9,809 were invited to take part in the panel and a total of 5,338 agreed to participate.<sup>5</sup> The second group of panelists was recruited from the 2015 Survey on Government, conducted Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015. Of the 6,004 adults interviewed, all were invited to join the panel, and 2,976 agreed to participate.<sup>6</sup>

Participating panelists provided either a mailing address or an email address to which a welcome packet, a monetary incentive and future survey invitations could be sent. Panelists also receive a small monetary incentive after participating in each wave of the survey.

The ATP data were weighted in a multistep process that begins with a base weight incorporating the respondents' original survey selection probability and the fact that in 2014 some panelists were subsampled for invitation to the panel. Next, an adjustment was made for the fact that the propensity to join the panel and remain an active panelist varied across different groups in the sample. The final step in the weighting uses an iterative technique that matches gender, age,

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<sup>5</sup> When data collection for the 2014 Political Polarization and Typology Survey began, non-internet users were subsampled at a rate of 25%, but a decision was made shortly thereafter to invite all non-internet users to join. In total, 83% of non-internet users were invited to join the panel.

<sup>6</sup> Respondents to the 2014 Political Polarization and Typology Survey who indicated that they are internet users but refused to provide an email address were initially permitted to participate in the American Trends Panel by mail, but were no longer permitted to join the panel after Feb. 6, 2014. Internet users from the 2015 Survey on Government who refused to provide an email address were not permitted to join the panel.

education, race, Hispanic origin and region to parameters from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2014 American Community Survey. Population density is weighted to match the 2010 U.S. Decennial Census. Telephone service is weighted to estimates of telephone coverage for 2016 that were projected from the January-June 2015 National Health Interview Survey. Volunteerism is weighted to match the 2013 Current Population Survey Volunteer Supplement. It also adjusts for party affiliation using an average of the three most recent Pew Research Center general public telephone surveys. Internet access is adjusted using a measure from the 2015 Survey on Government. Frequency of internet use is weighted to an estimate of daily internet use projected to 2016 from the 2013 Current Population Survey Computer and Internet Use Supplement. The share of respondents who get news from 10 different social networks was weighted to match a Pew Research Center Journalism survey from March-April 2016. Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish, but the Hispanic sample in the American Trends Panel is predominantly native born and English speaking.

The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

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### Sample sizes and margins of sampling error

	<u>Total users of each site</u>		<u>News consumers of each site</u>	
	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Facebook	3,210	2.9	2,563	3.2
YouTube	2,542	3.2	1,070	5.0
LinkedIn	1,348	4.4	481	7.4
Instagram	933	5.3	270	9.9
Twitter	908	5.4	700	6.1
Snapchat	439	7.7	--	--
Reddit	288	9.5	230	10.7
Tumblr	198	11.5	--	--
Vine	115	15.1	--	--

Note: Due to small sample sizes of Snapchat, Tumblr and Vine news users, we do not report out any analyses on these populations.

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.

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Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

The web component of the January wave had a response rate of 69% (4,339 responses among 6,301 web-based individuals in the panel); the mail component had a response rate of 67% (315 responses among 474 non-web individuals in the panel). Taking account of the combined, weighted response rate for the recruitment surveys (10.0%) and attrition from panel members who were removed at their request or for inactivity, the cumulative response rate for the January ATP wave is 2.9%<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>7</sup> Approximately once per year, panelists who have not participated in multiple consecutive waves are removed from the panel. These cases are counted in the denominator of cumulative response rates.

## Appendix A: 2013 and 2016 trends

*This appendix has been updated to reflect the fact that 2013 demographic numbers for Reddit and Instagram news users were too small to report. Demographic profiles of these two platforms have been removed from the first table.*

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### Demographics of social media news consumers

*% of news users of each site*

	Facebook		YouTube		Twitter		Instagram		LinkedIn		Reddit	
	2013	2016	2013	2016	2013	2016	2013	2016	2013	2016	2013	2016
Male	42	43	57	57	50	47	-	35	67	56	-	71
Female	58	57	43	43	50	53	-	65	33	44	-	29
18-29	34	31	39	38	45	38	-	58	18	20	-	59
30-49	39	38	34	30	38	39	-	28	50	46	-	33
50-64	20	22	17	23	14	19	-	12	27	24	-	7
65+	7	8	10	9	2	3	-	2	5	11	-	0
High school or less	39	33	48	34	31	17	-	28	12	8	-	9
Some college	31	34	29	41	29	38	-	41	24	26	-	43
College degree	30	33	23	25	40	45	-	31	64	65	-	48
White, non-Hispanic	63	65	45	55	57	61	-	40	58	65	-	74
Non-white	37	34	55	44	43	38	-	57	42	34	-	26
Republican	-	22	-	21	-	19	-	14	-	23	-	5
Democrat	-	31	-	29	-	31	-	40	-	29	-	29
Independent	-	32	-	31	-	31	-	27	-	34	-	44

Note: Numbers may not add to 100 due to rounding. Political party was asked differently in 2013, so it is not trended here.

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.

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### Portion of Americans who get news on social media in 2013 and 2016

*% of U.S. adults who get news on each site*

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2016</b>
Facebook	30	44
YouTube	10	10
Twitter	8	9
Instagram	1	4
LinkedIn	3	4
Reddit	2	2
Snapchat	-	2
Tumblr	1	1
Vine	0	0

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 12-Feb. 8, 2016.

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**Portion of social media  
site users who get news  
on each site**

*% of each site's users who get news  
there*

	<b>2013</b>	<b>2016</b>
Facebook	47	66
YouTube	20	21
Twitter	52	59
Instagram	13	23
LinkedIn	13	19
Reddit	62	70
Snapchat	-	17
Tumblr	29	31
Vine	9	14

Source: Survey conducted Jan. 12-Feb. 8,  
2016.

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## Topline questionnaire

### 2016 PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL

WAVE 14 January

FINAL TOPLINE

Jan. 12 – Feb. 8, 2016

TOTAL N=4,654

WEB RESPONDENTS N=4,339

MAIL RESPONDENTS N=315<sup>8</sup>

#### ASK ALL:

NEWS\_PLATFORM And how often do you... [RANDOMIZE]

	Often	Sometimes	Hardly ever	Never	No Answer
a. Read any newspapers in print?					
Jan 12-Feb 8 2016 [N=4,654]	20	28	31	21	*
Aug 21-Sep 2 2013 [N=5,173]	27	27	27	19	*
b. Listen to news on the radio?					
Jan 12-Feb 8 2016 [N=4,654]	25	34	24	17	*
Aug 21-Sep 2 2013 [N=5,173]	26	30	27	18	*
<b>NO ITEM C</b>					
d. Watch local television news?					
Jan 12-Feb 8 2016 [N=4,654]	46	27	17	10	*
Aug 21-Sep 2 2013 [N=5,173]	46	26	17	11	*
e. Watch national evening network television news (such as ABC World News, CBS Evening News, or NBC Nightly News)?					
Jan 12-Feb 8 2016 [N=4,654]	30	27	25	17	*
Aug 21-Sep 2 2013 [N=5,173]	31	28	24	18	*
f. Watch cable television news (such as CNN, The Fox News cable channel, or MSNBC)?					
Jan 12-Feb 8 2016 [N=4,654]	31	27	24	18	*
Aug 21-Sep 2 2013 [N=5,173]	24	28	26	21	*
g. Get news from a social networking site (such as Facebook or Twitter)?					
Jan 12-Feb 8 2016 [N=4,654]	18	26	18	38	*
h. Get news from a website or app?					
Jan 12-Feb 8 2016 [N=4,654]	28	28	18	26	*

<sup>8</sup> Question wording in this topline is that from the web version of the survey. Question wording and format was adapted for the paper questionnaire delivered by mail; this questionnaire is available on request. All questions asked in both modes unless noted.

**NEWS\_DEVICEa-NEWS\_DEVICEb HELD FOR FUTURE RELEASE****ASK IF GETS NEWS DIGITALLY (NEWS\_DEVICEa=1-3 OR NEWS\_DEVICEb=1-3):**

DIGNEWSFIRST Which statement best describes how you get news online, whether on a computer, phone, or tablet, even if neither is exactly right? **[RANDOMIZE]**

Jan 12-Feb 8

2016

N=4,236

44	I mostly come across news online because I'm looking for it
55	I mostly come across news online when I'm doing other things online
2	No Answer

**ASK ALL WEB:**

SNS Do you use any of the following social networking sites? *[Check all that apply]* **[RANDOMIZE WITH "OTHER" ALWAYS LAST]**

<b>BASED ON TOTAL</b>		<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No Answer</u>
a.	Facebook			
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=4,654]	67	33	-
	Mar 13-15, 20-22, 2015 [N=2,035]	66	34	1
	Aug 21-Sep 2, 2013 [N=5,173]	64	36	*
b.	Twitter			
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=4,654]	16	84	-
	Mar 13-15, 20-22, 2015 [N=2,035]	17	83	1
	Aug 21-Sep 2, 2013 [N=5,173]	16	84	*
<b>SNS_C NOT RELEASED</b>				
d.	LinkedIn			
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=4,654]	20	80	-
	Aug 21-Sep 2, 2013 [N=5,173]	19	80	*
e.	Instagram			
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=4,654]	19	81	-
	Aug 21-Sep 2, 2013 [N=5,173]	12	88	*
f.	Vine			
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=4,654]	2	98	-
	Aug 21-Sep 2, 2013 [N=5,173]	3	97	*
g.	Tumblr			
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=4,654]	4	96	-
	Aug 21-Sep 2, 2013 [N=5,173]	4	96	*
h.	YouTube			
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=4,654]	48	52	-
	Aug 21-Sep 2, 2013 [N=5,173]	51	49	*
i.	Reddit			
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=4,654]	4	96	-
	Aug 21-Sep 2, 2013 [N=5,173]	3	97	*
j.	Snapchat			
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=4,654]	10	90	-
k.	Other			

Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=4,654] 11 89 -

**ASK IF AT LEAST YES TO 1 ITEM SNS; SHOW ONLY THOSE SITES USED (SNSA-J=1):**

SNSNEWS Do you ever get news or news headlines on any of the following sites? Again, by news we mean information about events and issues that involve more than just your friends or family. [RANDOMIZE]

		<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No Answer</u>
<b>BASED ON FACEBOOK USERS:</b>				
a.	Facebook			
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=3,210]	66	34	*
	Mar 13-15, 20-22, 2015 [N=1,343]	63	37	*
	Aug 21-Sep 2, 2013 [N=3,268]	47	53	0
<b>BASED ON TWITTER USERS:</b>				
b.	Twitter			
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=908]	59	41	1
	Mar 13-15, 20-22, 2015 [N=347]	63	37	0
	Aug 21-Sep 2, 2013 [N=736]	52	48	0
<b>SNSNEWS NOT RELEASED</b>				
<b>BASED ON LINKEDIN USERS:</b>				
d.	LinkedIn			
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=1,348]	19	81	*
	Aug 21-Sep 2, 2013 [N=1,107]	13	87	0
<b>BASED ON INSTAGRAM USERS:</b>				
e.	Instagram			
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=933]	23	76	1
	Aug 21-Sep 2, 2013 [N=467]	13	87	0
<b>BASED ON VINE USERS:</b>				
f.	Vine			
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=115]	14	84	2
	Aug 21-Sep 2, 2013 [N=113]	9	91	0
<b>BASED ON TUMBLR USERS:</b>				
g.	Tumblr			
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=198]	31	69	-
	Aug 21-Sep 2, 2013 [N=159]	29	71	0
<b>BASED ON YOUTUBE USERS:</b>				
h.	YouTube			
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=2,542]	21	77	1
	Aug 21-Sep 2, 2013 [N=2,506]	20	80	0
<b>BASED ON REDDIT USERS:</b>				
i.	Reddit			
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=288]	70	30	*
	Aug 21-Sep 2, 2013 [N=114]	62	38	0
<b>BASED ON SNAPCHAT USERS:</b>				
j.	Snapchat			
	Jan 12-Feb 8, 2016 [N=439]	17	82	1