

FOR RELEASE JULY 18, 2016

Election 2016: Campaigns as a Direct Source of News

FOR MEDIA OR OTHER INQUIRIES:

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Election 2016: Campaigns as a Direct Source of News

Sixteen years after Pew Research Center's first study of digital communication in a presidential campaign, social media is central to candidates' outreach to the public, changing the role and nature of the campaign website. While the candidate website still serves as a hub for information and organization, it has become

leaner and less interactive compared with four years ago. Campaigns are active on social media though even here the message remains a very controlled one, leaving fewer ways overall for most voters to engage and take part.



Two separate studies examining the [campaign websites](#) of Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump from May 1-June 15, 2016, and on [Facebook and Twitter](#) from May 11-May 31, 2016, find that:

Clinton's campaign has almost entirely bypassed the news media while Trump draws heavily on news articles. Clinton's website offers two main sections for campaign news updates, both of which mimic the look and feel of a digital news publisher, but oriented around original content produced in-house. Trump, on the other hand, mostly posts stories from outside news media on his website. This pattern is also evident on social media, where 78% of Trump's links in Facebook posts send readers to news media stories while 80% of Clinton's direct followers to campaign pages. On Twitter, a similar tendency emerges in what each links to. Sanders, for the most part, falls in between the two.

On websites, citizen content is minimized or excluded altogether; in social media, Trump stands out for highlighting posts by members of the public.

Unlike previous cycles, none of the sites offers the user the option to create a personal fundraising page, nor do their news verticals have comment sections. And only Sanders affords supporters the ability to make calls on his behalf, offering customized scripts; the other candidates limit outreach to donation requests and email and volunteer sign-ups. Moreover, it was rare for any of the three

to repost material on social media from outsiders (there were almost no re-shares on Facebook and only about two-in-ten tweets from any of the candidates were retweets). Only Trump tended to include members of the public in his reposts: 78% of his retweets were from members of the public, compared with none of Clinton's and 2% of Sanders'. Trump's focus on the public also stands apart from 2012, when only 3% of Obama's tweets during the period studied and none of Romney's retweeted members of the general public.

None of the three websites featured any distinct section addressing specific voting groups or segments of the population – a popular feature of campaign websites in 2008 and 2012. In 2012, Obama's campaign offered opportunities to join 18 different constituency groups, while visitors to Romney's website could choose from nine different voter group pages. In 2008, both candidates offered around 20 such dedicated pages. In 2016, this feature is no longer present. There are still "issue" pages which explain the candidate's position on certain issues but do not allow for longer-term ways for voters to identify with the candidate or connect with other supporters.

Facebook and Twitter usher in a new age in audiovisual capabilities. Candidates were already experimenting with regularly posting videos in 2008 and 2012 as YouTube increased in popularity, though to a minimal degree. By contrast, Clinton posted about five videos a day on Facebook and Twitter during the time period studied and embedded video in about a quarter of both her total tweets and Facebook posts. Trump, who averaged about one video a day on social media, was least likely to include regularly updated videos on either social platform (only 2% of his tweets, for example).

These are some of the findings from a two-part study of how the presidential campaigns serve as direct sources of news and information to the public. The analyses of [social media posts](#) and [websites](#) represent a time period in the campaign when Trump had become the presumptive



Republican nominee and Clinton was still trying to secure the nomination as Sanders fought on. Also included is a look over time at [evolution of campaign information available online](#), from web portals and news sites to the websites of the presidential campaigns themselves.

1. Presidential candidates' changing relationship with the web

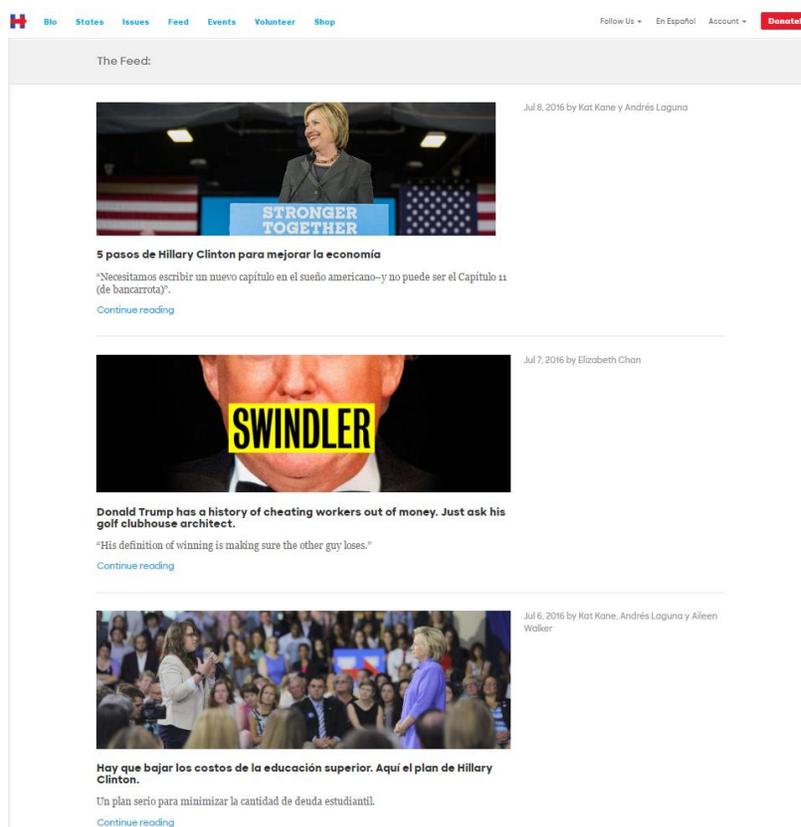
In 2016, presidential campaigns still deploy and maintain websites as a way of communicating with and mobilizing voters. But as campaigns increasingly prioritize [social media outreach](#), the role of campaign websites has changed – and in some cases narrowed.

A new Pew Research Center study of the campaign websites of Democratic presidential candidates Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders and Republican Donald Trump finds that Clinton's website oriented around original news content, while Trump mostly posted stories from outside news media, and Sanders was somewhere in between.¹ In addition to news updates, the three candidates also published some static content, particularly statements on their policy positions (in Trump's case, many were delivered in video form).

Gone are some of the features that in 2012 gave people a place to comment or express opinions on the campaign websites. For Clinton in particular, message control extended to the news items

Clinton's original content includes bylines

Image of Hillary Clinton's "The Feed" page of her campaign website



Source: The official presidential campaign website of Hillary Clinton, June 12, 2016. "Election 2016: Campaigns as a Direct Source of News"

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¹ Other Republican candidates suspended their campaigns shortly after the data collection period began, leaving too little material to study and therefore they were not included in this analysis.

produced: Her campaign has almost entirely bypassed the news media in terms of web content, instead emphasizing news produced in-house, similar to Obama’s approach in 2012 (though a number of her news updates did contain links to outside news media).

Another stark difference compared with the previous two election cycles is the absence of specific areas on their websites aimed at different social and demographic groups such as seniors, African Americans or rural Americans. In 2012, visitors to Obama’s website were offered opportunities to join 18 different constituency groups, among them African-Americans, women, the LGBT community, Latinos, veterans/military families or young Americans, with content targeted to each constituency. The Romney campaign featured a communities section that by early August 2012 featured nine groups with specialized content. In 2016, none of the three websites studied have a dedicated page or customized content for these kinds of voter groups.

This analysis is part of a larger [study](#) by Pew Research Center of the news and information that campaigns directly communicate to voters, which is also the third in a series of reports on presidential candidates’ digital footprints. This exploration of campaign websites, along with those of the [2012](#) and [2008](#) major party candidates, offers something of a time capsule, reflecting the political priorities and digital communication strategies of the moment.

This analysis is focused on the static features of each candidate’s website, between the weeks of May 1 and June 15, 2016, a period in the campaign when Trump became the presumptive Republican nominee and Clinton gained momentum over Sanders in her quest to secure the nomination.² More details on the methodology for this report can be found [here](#).

Candidates differ in the news they offer and the orientation of their sites

Candidate websites have, in four years’ time, become somewhat leaner. Hillary Clinton’s site averaged two original posts per day during the time period studied (though if Spanish translations of the English-language posts were counted, that number would rise to three), while Bernie Sanders’ and Donald Trump’s sites each averaged three original posts per day. Frequent blog posts helped boost the average number of posts per day in 2012 to [eight for Obama’s website and four for Mitt Romney’s](#).

Clinton’s site offers two main sections for news updates related to her campaign: “The Feed” and “The Briefing,” both of which mimic the look and feel of a digital news publisher, complete with professional styling and, in the case of The Feed, bylines. All of the content appears to be original and produced in-house; it consists of text-driven articles, some with videos embedded, but few

² The time period studied in the 2008 report was Aug. 6-Sept. 9, and in 2012, it was June 4-17.

traditional press releases.³ The site connects with its Spanish-speaking audience by providing translations of English-language posts in The Feed. During this period, 20 Spanish-language posts were found, the vast majority of which were translations of English-language news items. There is no section on the site for links to external news articles – a choice also made by the Obama campaign in 2012.

Trump’s site offers much less original news content than Clinton’s. What is there mostly consists of press releases found in a dropdown menu of the site’s “Media” tab. During the time period studied, no Spanish content was identified among the news items posted by the Trump campaign. The same menu offers another section full of links and excerpts from articles produced by outside sources such as Fox News or CNN, content that forms the majority of the news material offered by the site. The Trump site does offer video content, but these videos largely appear in sections devoted to the candidate’s policy positions and produced as more evergreen pieces, which are not part of the purview of the news analysis here. Some videos on the Trump site are clips from outside news organizations and appear under the Media tab.⁴

Sanders’ site contains elements that overlap with both Clinton’s and Trump’s sites. “Democracy Daily” is a repository for news articles from outside news organizations that highlight issues or the campaign. The “News” section contains both press releases and original posts that give updates from the field, though these sections were not as frequently updated as on Clinton’s site during the time period studied here. Some of these posts, as with Clinton’s site, are multimedia, while there were also three Spanish translations of news items.

A tightly controlled platform

One aspect of campaign websites that has fluctuated in recent election cycles is the balance between a tightly controlled message and public participation. In 2016, the emphasis of all campaigns is clearly on the message, especially when it comes to news content.

³ The news feed posts on Clinton’s site were bylined, though no information was found on the site about the identities of the authors.

⁴ Each of the three candidates offer a section on their websites explaining their policy positions and platforms. These were not included in the accounting of total news updates appearing on the sites.

Unlike previous cycles, none of the sites offer the user the option to create a personal fundraising page. In addition, candidates' news verticals did not have comment sections.

When it comes to other kinds of public engagement, Sanders stood out for offering certain options on his website for people to become involved in the campaign, both in online and offline ways. Visitors to the Sanders website can find out how to make calls on behalf of the candidate with customized scripts. The site also provides pre-scripted tweets on behalf of the candidate. For Clinton and Trump, voter engagement is mostly limited to email and volunteer list sign-ups and requests for donations and, in Clinton's case, the opportunity to host events – which the Sanders site offers as well.

The relatively static nature of these website designs may reflect the idea that social media platforms have become the new place for more interactive engagement with citizens (though the Center's [separate analysis of candidates' social media activity](#) suggests this is not entirely the case). Nevertheless, aside from some links to social sites, website visitors do not get much of a window

into what candidates are saying on social media. While the websites of all three candidates studied here link to their social media feeds (these include Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and now Instagram for each, with the addition of Pinterest for Clinton and Tumblr for Sanders), neither Clinton nor Sanders includes any of their live social feeds on their websites. Trump, on the other hand, displays his live Twitter feed in a widget on his homepage.

Instagram now a campaign website staple

Links to social networking sites present on campaign websites

	2008		2012		2016		
	Obama	McCain	Obama	Romney	Sanders	Clinton	Trump
Facebook	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Twitter			x	x	x	x	x
YouTube	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Instagram			x		x	x	x
Pinterest			x			x	
Tumblr			x		x		
Google+			x	x			
Flickr	x	x	x	x			
Spotify			x				
Myspace	x	x					

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the official presidential campaign websites of major party candidates from Aug. 6-Sept. 9, 2008, June 4–17, 2012, and May 1–June 15, 2016.

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One hallmark of campaign websites in 2012 and 2008 was outreach to voter affinity groups, with offerings of customizable information and ways to connect with people of similar backgrounds or interests. In 2012, Obama's campaign offered opportunities to join 18 different constituency groups, while visitors to Romney's website could choose from nine different voter group pages. In 2008, both candidates offered roughly 20 such dedicated pages. In 2016, this feature is no longer present. None of the

three websites featured any distinct section addressing specific voting groups or segments of the population. There are still “issue” pages – pages dedicated to the candidates’ position on certain issues, which were also present in earlier years. Trump’s site, for example, includes pages that explain his position on Veterans Administration reforms and Second Amendment rights; Sanders has pages about his views on native Hawaiians’ rights and women’s rights; while Clinton does for workers’ rights and LGBT rights. These allow a visitor to learn a candidate’s current views on a policy or group-related issue but do not allow for a way to identify with the candidate or connect with other supporters.

One type of customization all three campaigns offer their visitors is at the state level, though this feature has been in flux. Clinton’s state-level pages – aimed at battleground and primary states at the time of the study’s field period, but since expanded to include all 50 states and the District of Columbia – mainly offers individuals the opportunity to sign up to volunteer. The 50 state pages (as well as the District of Columbia and U.S. territories) on the Sanders campaign site feature information about voting in each state’s primaries and caucuses, including the type of primary, ID requirements and early voting dates. At the time of analysis, Trump’s site offered a customized option for 37 states. However, the link to this feature was later removed from the homepage.

In 2016, campaign websites do not have dedicated pages to voter groups

Campaign website pages dedicated to specific voter groups, 2008, 2012, 2016

2008		2012		2016		
Obama	McCain	Obama	Romney	Sanders	Clinton	Trump
African Americans	African Americans	African Americans	Asians & Pacific Islanders	None	None	None
Americans abroad	Americans with disabilities	Americans with disabilities	Catholics			
Americans with disabilities	Arab Americans	Asians & Pacific Islanders	Jewish Americans			
Arab Americans	Asians & Pacific Islanders	Educators	Latinos/Hispanics			
Asians & Pacific Islanders	Bipartisans	Environmentalists	Lawyers			
Environmentalists	Catholics	Health Care Professionals/ Nurses	Polish Americans			
Generation "O" (25 to 35)	Environmentalists	Jewish Americans	Veterans/Military Families			
Jewish Americans	Future Leaders (25 to 45)	Latinos/Hispanics	Women			
Kids (Under 18)	Health Care Professionals/ Nurses	LGBT	Young Americans			
Labor	Jewish Americans	Native Americans				
Latinos/Hispanics	Latinos/Hispanics	Parents				
LGBT	Lawyers	People of Faith				
Native Americans	Lebanese Americans	Rural Americans				
People of Faith	Racing Fans	Seniors				
Republicans for Obama	Small Business Leaders	Small Business Leaders				
Rural Americans	Sportsmen	Veterans/Military Families				
Seniors	Veterans/Military Families	Women				
Students	Women	Young Americans				
Veterans/Military Families						
Women						

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the official presidential campaign websites of major party candidates from Aug. 6-Sept. 9, 2008, June 4-17, 2012, and May 1-June 15, 2016.

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2. Candidates differ in their use of social media to connect with the public

Social media are playing an increasingly large role in the way campaigns communicate with voters. In January 2016, [44% of U.S. adults](#) reported having learned about the 2016 presidential election in the past week from social media, outpacing both local and national print newspapers. Moreover, as of July, 24% say they have turned to the social media posts of Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton for news and information about the election – more than those who turn to either of the candidates’ websites or emails combined (15%).⁵

A new Pew Research Center analysis of three weeks of the candidates’ Facebook and Twitter accounts finds both similarities and differences in the ways Hillary Clinton, Donald Trump and Bernie Sanders use these still relatively new campaign tools. The study of 714 tweets and 389 Facebook posts made by the candidates between May 11 and May 31, 2016, finds that the three candidates post at similar rates but differ in the focus of these posts and in the attention they receive from the public. On Facebook, Clinton and Sanders mostly use links to highlight official campaign communications while Trump links frequently to the news media. On Twitter, Trump stands out for retweeting ordinary people more often than Clinton or Sanders (though retweets are rare).

Videos, meanwhile, appeared in about a quarter of Clinton’s social media posts, compared with about one-in-ten of Trump’s; Sanders used video far more on Facebook than on Twitter. Finally, on both platforms, when the candidates mention their opponents, Clinton and Trump focus on each other while Sanders goes largely unmentioned.



Source: The Twitter page of Donald Trump and the Facebook pages of Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders, July 12, 2016.

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⁵ Bernie Sanders was not included in this survey. See [Topline](#) and [Methodology](#) for more information.

Overall, people who follow these candidates on social media see the daily cycle of the campaign through a narrow window. Candidates naturally select messages beneficial to their campaigns to share with followers. While Clinton mostly passes on messages crafted by the campaign itself, Trump reaches out to news media and the public. Sanders employs a mix of campaign communications and news media in his posts.

These are some of the findings from an analysis of the candidates' social media activity during a period in the campaign when Trump had become the presumptive Republican nominee and Clinton was still trying to secure the Democratic nomination as Sanders fought on. Content was collected from the Twitter and Facebook API and hand-coded by a team of researchers. (For more information, see our [methodology](#).)

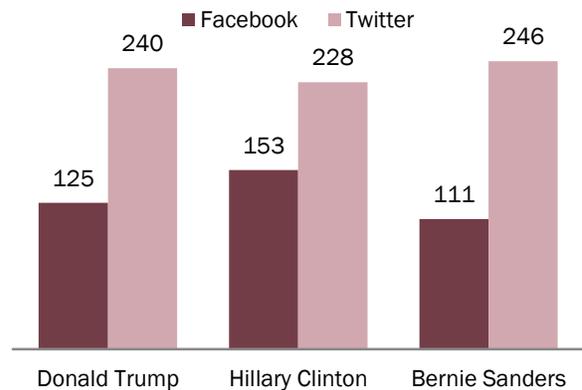
Clinton and Sanders post as frequently as Trump – but his tweets and Facebook posts get far more attention

Over the three weeks studied, Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders posted on Facebook and Twitter at roughly similar rates, averaging five to seven posts per day on their Facebook pages and 11-12 posts per day on their Twitter accounts.

While the candidates' level of posting was about the same, public response was far from equal.⁶ In every measurable category of user attention – Facebook shares, comments, and reactions, as well as Twitter retweets – the public responded to Donald Trump's social media updates more frequently on average than to either of the other candidates' posts. Trump's posts on Twitter, for example, were retweeted almost 6,000 times on average compared with just over 1,500 for Clinton and almost 2,500 for Sanders.⁷ This may be due in part to Trump's higher number of followers. Near the time of publication, he had almost 10 million followers on Twitter compared with Clinton's 7 million and Sanders' 3 million, while on Facebook, 9 million followed Trump's official page, about double the number who followed either Clinton's or Sanders' pages.

All three candidates post at similar rates, but Trump gets the most response overall

Total # of posts on each platform over the three weeks studied



Average ... per post

Candidate	Facebook			Twitter
	Shares	Comments	Reactions	Retweets
Donald Trump	8,367	5,230	76,885	5,947
Hillary Clinton	1,636	1,729	12,537	1,581
Bernie Sanders	6,341	1,070	31,830	2,463

Note: Reactions are a sum of all reactions to a post, including "like," "love," "angry," "sad," "haha" and "wow." Audience reactions were measured at least two days but no more than one week after a post was created. Retweets do not include posts that the candidate retweeted from another user.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of posts on Facebook and Twitter from May 11-31, 2016.

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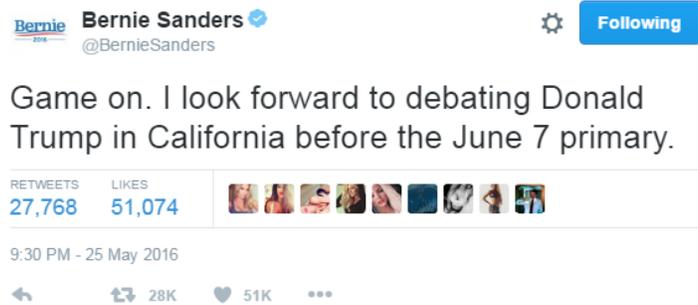
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⁶ Audience interaction data for all posts were captured at least two days after the post time and no more than one week after the post time.

⁷ Retweet averages do not include posts that the candidate directly retweeted from another individual or organization.

Both Trump and Sanders had a few posts that received outsized responses. Sanders' [declaration on Twitter that he would debate Trump](#), for example, had received roughly 28,000 retweets at the time of the study, while a [Facebook post from Sanders celebrating Native Americans](#) received over 52,000 shares. And [Trump's tweet attacking Clinton on gun control](#) had received about 16,000 retweets, while his Facebook post [supporting police](#) was shared over 72,000 times. Comparatively, Clinton had no breakout posts or tweets in this period, instead collecting a fairly steady number of interactions on her posts and tweets. Her most retweeted tweet, about [drought conditions in California](#), had received about 5,600 retweets at the time of analysis, while her most highly shared Facebook post was a video [attacking Donald Trump](#) that was shared 15,000 times. Even accounting for the posts that drew overwhelming attention, Trump still received the most public response. Looking at the median – or middle point – rather than the average number of interactions per posts puts less weight on the extremes, and under this metric, Trump maintains his top position.

With one major exception, the level of social media activity by the candidates is higher than during the 2012 presidential campaign. The Center's study of a similar timeframe that year found that candidates Barack Obama and Mitt Romney updated their Facebook statuses twice a day, on average – less than half as often as the 2016 candidates. On Twitter, Romney averaged just one tweet a day, again far lower than the 2016 candidates. However, in 2012 Obama far outpaced both Romney and the 2016 candidates studied, averaging 29 tweets per day. (These tweets were spread across two accounts, though both were officially tied to the campaign.)



The public response in 2016 is a little harder to compare due to the substantial differences by candidate as well as a slight change in the study's methodology across time.⁸ However, it is worth noting the overall numbers as a general reference point. In 2012, Obama's Facebook posts received over 40,000 likes on average, while Romney's received about 19,000; on Twitter, both received fewer than 600 retweets per post.

In terms of total followers, Obama's 2012 campaign had a much larger number of followers than the 2016 candidates as well as his own rival at the time – though much of this almost certainly stems from the fact that Obama was a sitting president running for a second term. At the time of the 2012 analysis, Obama had more than 27 million Facebook followers and about 18 million Twitter followers across his two accounts. This is far higher than Trump, the 2016 candidate with the highest number of followers (10 million on Twitter and 9 million on Facebook). Romney had about 3 million Facebook and about 800,000 Twitter followers in 2012, far fewer than any 2016 candidate.

⁸ Because the collection processes differed slightly between 2012, when all public data were captured at 9 a.m. the second day after the post date, and 2016, when some public data were not captured until a week after the post date, these may not be directly comparable. However, [previous research](#) has shown that, at least on Facebook, attention tends to dwindle 24 hours after the post time, so we expect that the increased time before collection on some posts in 2016 did not lead to increased attention statistics.

Clinton and Sanders link to their campaign websites, while Trump links to news media

One common practice in social media is to add links to external web pages, news articles or other online material when creating a post. In the context of a political campaign, a link within a social media post can help a reader find more information, become more involved with the campaign or lend credibility to the post's content. During the time period analyzed, the use of links by Trump, Clinton and Sanders varied, both from one candidate to the next and across the two social networks studied.

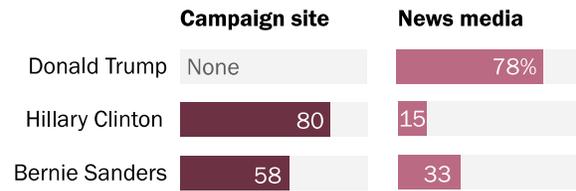
Within their Facebook posts, the candidates included external links at similar rates: 30% of Clinton's posts on Facebook included links, as did 32% of Sanders' posts and 30% of Trump's posts.⁹ What they linked to, however, varied a great deal. Like [Obama and Romney in 2012](#), Clinton's and Sanders' Facebook feeds most often linked to their own official campaign websites or social media accounts. Fully 80% of Clinton's Facebook posts with links went to campaign pages, as did 58% of Sanders' Facebook posts. These include links to campaign events, videos (both recorded and streaming) and donation pages.

Links to news media outlets were considerably less common for these two Democratic candidates. Only 15% of the posts with links in Clinton's Facebook feed directed readers to news articles. In comparison, news media links from organizations such as Politico, Univision and medium.com comprised a third (33%) of posts with links in the Sanders feed.

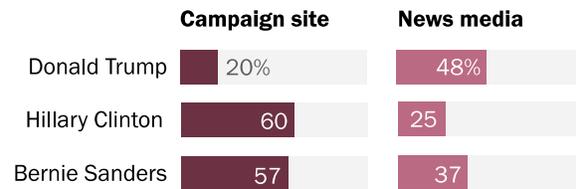
Trump's Facebook posts, on the other hand, more frequently [pointed readers to news media](#). Fully 78% of his posts with links directed followers to articles from large national or international media

On Facebook, Sanders and Clinton mostly link to their own campaigns, Trump mostly to news media

% of Facebook posts containing links that go to ...



% of Twitter posts containing links that go to ...



Note: "Other" not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of posts on Facebook and Twitter from May 11-31, 2016

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⁹ If a post contained multiple links, researchers only coded the link that Facebook noted as the primary link, for which it created a link preview.

organizations such as Fox News and the Daily Mail, as well as more niche sites like the conservative magazine The American Spectator. Trump never linked to his campaign site in a Facebook post. This seems to be in line with Trump's general strategy of focusing on media appearances and rallies during this period, rather than [volunteers](#) or [donations](#).

On Twitter (where Clinton and Sanders include links about a third of the time and Trump just a tenth), a similar pattern emerges.

Sanders most often linked to his own campaign websites (57% of all links) followed by news media (37%), roughly the same rate as he did on Facebook. Clinton similarly linked to her own campaign 60% of the time on Facebook and the news media a quarter of the time. And Trump again linked most frequently to news sites (48% of posts with links), although, in contrast to Facebook, he did link to his campaign site on Twitter in 20% of all links he posted.



On Twitter, Trump primarily retweets the public, while Sanders retweets the news media and Clinton retweets her campaign

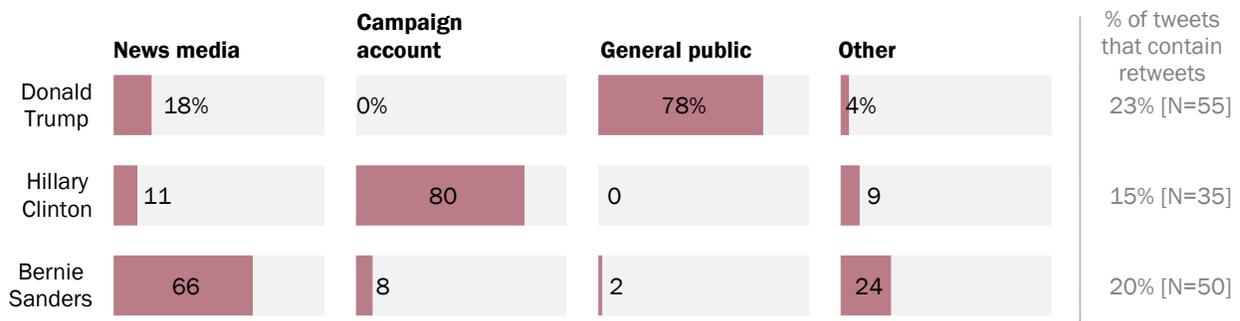
Another way of engaging with others on social media is to directly repost content posted by someone else – whether a media organization, another political figure or a member of the public.

On Facebook, Sanders was the only one of the three candidates to share someone else’s posts during these three weeks studied – and he only did so twice.

On Twitter, however, all three did at least some promotion – or *retweeting* – of outside content.

No candidate retweets much, but when they do, Trump retweets the public, Clinton retweets herself and Sanders retweets news media

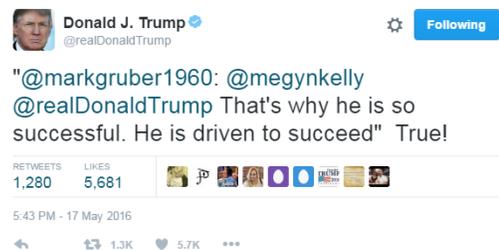
% of each candidates’ retweets that include each type of Twitter account



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of posts on Twitter from May 11-31, 2016.
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About a quarter (23%) of Trump’s tweets were retweets, as were one-in-five of Sanders’ and 15% of Clinton’s. The candidates’ retweets, however, reflected different strategies. Trump was most likely to retweet the public, Clinton her own campaign accounts and Sanders the news media. Of Trump’s 55 retweets, about eight-in-ten (78%) were of people who were not famous and had no discernable ties to news media, government or other organizations – in other words, the general public. Most were of [supporters offering congratulations](#) or compliments to Trump, to



which he often responded at the end of the post (see example).¹⁰ Some, though, were posts that made critical statements about others; Trump has taken some criticism for these types of retweets. In a May debate, for example, Fox News host Megyn Kelly [questioned Trump](#) about his retweets of derogatory statements about Kelly made by private citizens.

Clinton and Sanders, on the other hand, almost never retweeted the public during the time studied. Just one post from Sanders was a retweet of someone outside the public sphere, while the public was not the source of any of Clinton's retweets. Instead, 80% of Hillary Clinton's 35 retweets were of her own staff or of her campaign's other accounts. About four-in-ten (43%) of these campaign retweets were retweets of @TheBriefing2016, a fact checking account of the Clinton campaign with the stated purpose of "setting the facts straight."

Sanders, on the other hand, is the most likely candidate to retweet news media (66% of his 50 retweets). Another 24% of his retweets were of other types of accounts, including 12% that were celebrity accounts. In contrast, Clinton never retweeted a celebrity account.

Trump's unique engagement with the public on Twitter stands apart not just from the other 2016 candidates but also from past presidential campaigns. In 2012, the candidates' social media outreach offered little engagement with the public. Just 3% of Obama's tweets [during the period studied](#) were retweets of the public – and most of these were posted during a live Twitter Q&A. Romney rarely used the retweet functionality and never retweeted the public.



¹⁰ [This example](#) also shows Trump's preferred method of retweeting users. In the three weeks studied, he only twice used Twitter's built-in retweet function to share another user's posts. In the other 53 instances, he posted a "manual retweet" by copying and pasting the user's tweet into a new post and using quotation marks to differentiate his comments from the original tweet

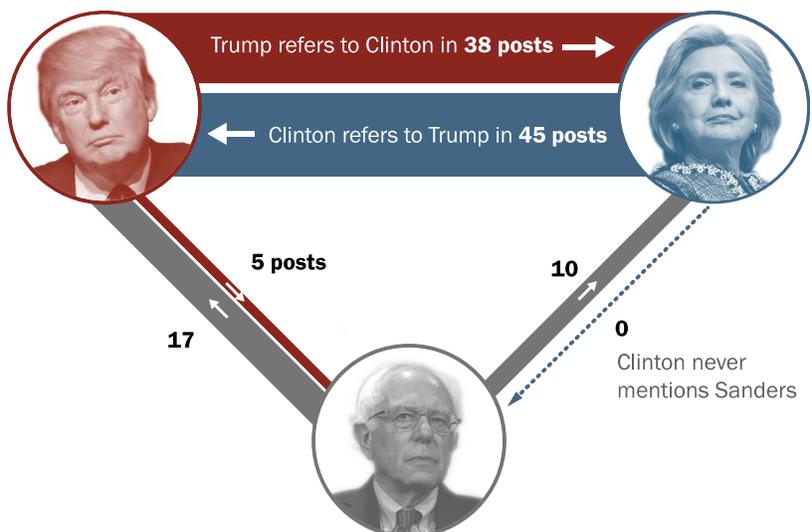
Trump and Clinton mention each other frequently

Facebook and Twitter users can refer to others on the site in a few different ways. One is by directly linking to their accounts in a post. On Twitter, these are called @-mentions. There is no formal name for this functionality on Facebook, but the process and effect are largely the same. Short of this formal mention, a user could simply refer to that person or organization by name in plain text. Each carries a somewhat different message. The links, or @-mentions, alert the individual or organization of the reference and can direct readers to the accounts mentioned. By including this link instead of just their name, the original user can include other users in the conversation, acknowledge their contributions or direct followers to their accounts. In contrast, when a user refers to another individual without the link to their account, it suggests that the discussion is intended for only the original user's followers.

The 2016 candidates used a combination of these approaches in mentioning their opponents, while only Trump and Clinton regularly used the formal mention functions to refer to other users on Facebook and Twitter.

On Facebook, Trump and Clinton focused on each other

Number of posts in which candidates refer to each other by name or by @-mention on Facebook over the three weeks studied



Source: Pew Research Center analysis of posts on Facebook from May 11-31, 2016. "Election 2016: Campaigns as a Direct Source of News"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Candidates referring to each other

In the waning days of the primaries studied here, with Trump the presumptive nominee and Clinton ahead in delegate counts, most of the candidate cross-talk was between Trump and Clinton. On Facebook, Clinton and Trump mentioned each other at similar rates – in about three-in-ten of their posts. Both most often did so through the less formal text mention. However, 13 of Clinton’s 45 posts mentioning Trump did so using the official Facebook mention function thereby alerting Trump and linking readers directly to his page. None of Trump’s posts used the formal mention function to link to Clinton’s page, and in nearly all (32 of the 38 posts), he referred to her as “Crooked Hillary.”

When it came to Sanders, more interactions occurred on Facebook between Sanders and Trump than between the two Democratic rivals. Clinton never mentioned Sanders using either format while Trump mentioned him only five times, usually to boost Sanders’ campaign at the expense of Clinton’s. Sanders mentioned Trump more often (17 times) than Clinton (10 times) but named neither Clinton nor Trump at the rates they mentioned each other.

On Twitter, the focus was again on Trump and Clinton referring to each other, but here, Clinton referred to Trump at twice the rate that Trump referred to her. Fully 40% of Clinton’s tweets referred to Trump (whether by name or using an @-mention), compared with 19% of Trump’s tweets that mentioned Clinton – the majority of which again used the “Crooked Hillary” nickname. Aside from this, the pattern remained mostly the same. Clinton never referred to Sanders, while Sanders mentioned Clinton about half as often as he mentioned Trump (10 times to 19 times). And Trump referred to Sanders in 5% of his tweets – again, most of which were supportive of Sanders’ efforts to beat Clinton.

In these mentions, the candidates only rarely used the @-mention function. Trump used Clinton’s and Sander’s Twitter handles in an @-mention only once each; Sanders also used an @-mention one time for each candidate. Clinton did so more frequently, but still very rarely: 16 of Clinton’s 92 tweets referring to Trump did so using an @-mention.

Formal mentions of other users

While the candidates did not often refer to each other using the formal mention functionality built into Facebook and Twitter, both Trump and Clinton used this method to highlight other users.¹¹

¹¹ A single post can contain multiple mentions. For example, Sanders’ 21 @-mentions overall were found in 19 of his 246 tweets. We also excluded all retweeted users from the @-mentions count, including Trump’s manual retweets.

Trump formally mentioned another user 29 times in his Facebook posts. As with his links, the news media got the most attention, making up 38% of his user mentions. His second most-mentioned category was family members (28% of his mentions), naming his daughter Ivanka four times, his son Donald Jr. three times and his son Eric once. Celebrities, from musician Billy Joel to golfer Jack Nicklaus, made up 17% of his mentions, while politicians made up just 14%.

Clinton, on the other hand, mentioned other users 33 times in her Facebook posts, with politicians accounting for about half (52%) and news media accounting for just 12%. She mentioned celebrities roughly as often as Trump did (18% of her mentions), but she focused on considerably different people, mentioning TV host Ellen DeGeneres and musicians such as John Legend, Ricky Martin and Andra Day.

On Twitter, the pattern was largely the same, though neither celebrities nor family members were present in the same numbers. Trump @-mentioned other users 112 times. In these mentions, he focused largely on the news media, naming media outlets or journalists in about three-quarters (72%) of his @-mentions.¹² Most informed followers of a TV news appearance, highlighted news stories about himself or his issues, or [attacked particular outlets](#). The New York Times was the most frequent target of the latter type of mention, especially in the wake of an [investigation](#) it published into Trump's relationship with women.

Clinton, however, named the news media in only 16% of her 50 formal mentions. She was most likely to mention other politicians (46%), including Trump, but also other prominent politicians such as President Barack Obama or former House member Gabby Giffords.

On both Facebook and Twitter, Sanders used the mention functionality less frequently. He formally mentioned another user in less than 10% of both his Facebook posts and his tweets.



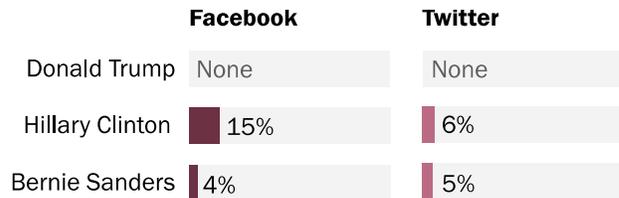
¹² Donald Trump's mentions of himself were excluded, as he often responds to retweets with his username.

Only Clinton and Sanders post in Spanish on Facebook and Twitter – but neither does so frequently

The vast majority of posts from all candidates were written in English. However, Donald Trump's campaign posted only in English, while both Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders occasionally posted in Spanish during the time period studied. Spanish language posts constituted 15% of Clinton's Facebook posts and 6% of her tweets, while 4% of Sanders' Facebook posts and 5% of his tweets were in Spanish. This is reflective of the campaigns' outreach to Spanish-speaking communities, [particularly in California](#), which voted soon after the end of the collection period. Spanish language posts ranged from tweets sharing Spanish-language news media to messages targeted to Spanish-speaking communities – sometimes [direct translations](#) of [English-language posts](#).

Clinton and Sanders include Spanish language in their posts

% of candidate posts on ... that are in Spanish during the three weeks studied



Note: Donald Trump did not have any posts in Spanish on either platform.

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of posts on Facebook and Twitter from May 11-31, 2016.

"Election 2016: Campaigns as a Direct Source of News"

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Clinton includes videos in about a quarter of posts on Facebook and Twitter, more than any other candidate

Since 2012, both [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) have enhanced their video capabilities, making it easier to include multimedia and adding features such as autoplay, which plays embedded videos as users scroll through their feeds without user input.

Amid these developments, Clinton stood out for using videos most frequently. About a quarter of both her tweets (27%) and her Facebook posts (23%) during the time period studied contained embedded videos. Sanders included videos in about one-in-five of his Facebook posts (21%) but only 9% of his tweets. Trump was the least likely to include videos on either platform, doing so just four times on Twitter (2% of his tweets) and in 13% of his posts on Facebook.

Generally, the videos both Clinton and Sanders posted were [campaign ads](#). Sanders, however, was almost equally likely to post footage (or, in one case, a live stream) from his rallies. On Facebook, Clinton also posted videos showing the candidate talking with voters about policy issues in small groups. Trump's handful of videos were generally of news footage or interviews with himself or members of his campaign.



[Compared to 2012](#), Clinton and Sanders posted videos on par with or more frequently than either Romney or Obama did on Facebook or Twitter.

Beyond video, one novel social media technique used by the campaigns, not found in our studies of previous elections, was the use of images with prominent text and/or numbers to convey factual or message-based information.

Trump, for example, occasionally posted [screenshots of polls](#) or other news-related information. Clinton also posted screenshots, which were mostly [text-heavy infographics](#) designed around a single factoid or slogan such as “[Two thirds of Americans earning the minimum wage are women.](#)” The static images used by Sanders, on the other hand, tended to be [infographics that shared information about rallies or voting](#), or conveyed celebrity endorsements. These kinds of static image-based posts can quickly convey information or messages to followers, but since they often do not include links, can make it difficult for users to confirm or find additional information.

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump · May 22
 Thank you America! #Trump2016



12K 32K

Bernie Sanders @BernieSanders · May 17
 Kentucky — It's your turn to vote for our political revolution. Grab your friends and family and go out and vote.

Kentucky for Bernie

You Vote: TUESDAY, MAY 17

2016 PRIMARY INFORMATION

- Kentucky has closed primaries — Kentuckians must be registered as a Democrat to vote for Bernie!
- You must have been registered to vote by Monday, April 18th.
- Only 17? You can still vote in Kentucky if you'll be 18 years old by November 8, 2016.
- Polls open from 6:00 AM to 6:00 PM

Issues voting or witness irregularities at the polls? Call our hotline: (502) 242-2090

FIND YOUR POLLING LOCATION AT:
VOTE.BERNIESANDERS.COM/KY

2.4K 4.3K

Hillary Clinton @HillaryClinton · May 23
 There's so much more that unites us than divides us. It's time to come together to stop Donald Trump.

"The only thing standing between Donald Trump and the Oval Office is all of us."

Hillary Clinton
 May 23, 2016

4.1K 9K

3. Digital news developments in U.S. presidential campaigns, 2000-2016

Introduction

Since the start of the 21st century, the internet has evolved from a novelty accessed by [half of the American population](#) to a resource now used by nearly 90% and [a primary way for the public to keep up with the news, events and issues](#) of the day. This is true as well when it comes to our nation's presidential elections: Roughly [two-thirds of Americans](#) (65%) report learning about the election on the web. Across the past five presidential election cycles, Pew Research Center has studied the evolution of digital news options from web portals and news sites to the websites of the presidential campaigns themselves. Below are highlights from each of those reports. While the data from year to year can't always be directly compared due to the rapidly shifting state of technology (and resulting changes in the study designs themselves), the snapshot findings from each year speak to both dramatic change and areas that even today are still developing.

2000 ([Report link](#))

Al Gore (D) vs. George W. Bush (R)

The Center conducted its first study of online election-related news and information during the primary season of 2000. [That year](#), nearly a quarter of Americans got at least some of their campaign news through the internet, but only 6% named it as their primary source for campaign news.

While many of the candidates did have campaign websites, [these varied](#) in navigability, scope and depth, and the information provided there was not consistently updated. Instead, online campaign news mainly flowed through a mix of traditional news outlets, like The New York Times and MSNBC and web portals like Netscape and Yahoo, whose main feature was aggregated news from several news organizations. A study of six selected dates of primary coverage on the political front pages of 12 of these sites (five web portals, six news websites tied to legacy outlets and one digital-native news site) found:

The use of links to additional information was still very much in development. Unlike today's online news sites, where embedded links are a regular feature, three of the sites offered no links to external news sites, while another five had just one to three such links across the entire time period studied. Links to other kinds of external site such as Vote-Smart.org, a site that provided aggregated information about candidates, were even less common. Internal links to background information or the voting calendar were somewhat more common, though even here there were a couple of sites where a user could not find any such information. Less than half the sites offered any links to information on the policy stances of the candidates.

Opportunities for the public to engage with the site, such as by taking a survey or voting on the candidates, were rare, but some sites made it a priority. Three of the sites studied did not offer any opportunity on their front pages for readers to "take part." Another three offered only one to two interactive elements. Still, some of the sites, such as The Washington Post



and MSNBC, stood out by offering multiple interactive elements, everything from an online game to online discussions with reporters to “candidate matchmaker” which allowed users to compare their views on issues with those of the candidates.

Sites were split in whether they offered unfiltered audio or video. Four of the 12 sites gave no access to raw video such as from a candidate debate, while another four regularly offered seven or more such videos.

2004 ([Report link](#))

John Kerry (D) vs. George W. Bush (R)

2004 was the first presidential election year in which digital tools played a major role. However, while more digital-native news providers had emerged and some new features were introduced, there was also backward movement in certain areas.

The study of seven days of election coverage during the primary season examined the political front pages of 10 popular news web sites (three digital natives – Salon, AOL and Yahoo – and eight legacy news outlets) and found that:

Compared with four years earlier, news sites provided citizens with more ways to gather additional information about the candidates or election news. Seven of

the 10 sites contained links on their front pages for users to learn about candidates’ policy positions, more than four years earlier. Seven also contained biographical background information, and eight offered basic voter information about the primary process.

But, interactivity remained scarce. Four of the 10 sites studied had no interactive links on their front pages, offering even fewer opportunities than in 2000 for users to “take part” in the news. Instead, sites were opting to customize static information such as a clickable map with details about a state’s primaries.

Websites were still hesitant to send users outside their own walled gardens. Seven of the 10 sites studied had no links to external, non-news sites, a downtick from four years earlier that may have been attributed to the demise of political news sites such as Voter.com. Six of the 10 contained no links to external news organizations, including some that four years ago were more collaborative.



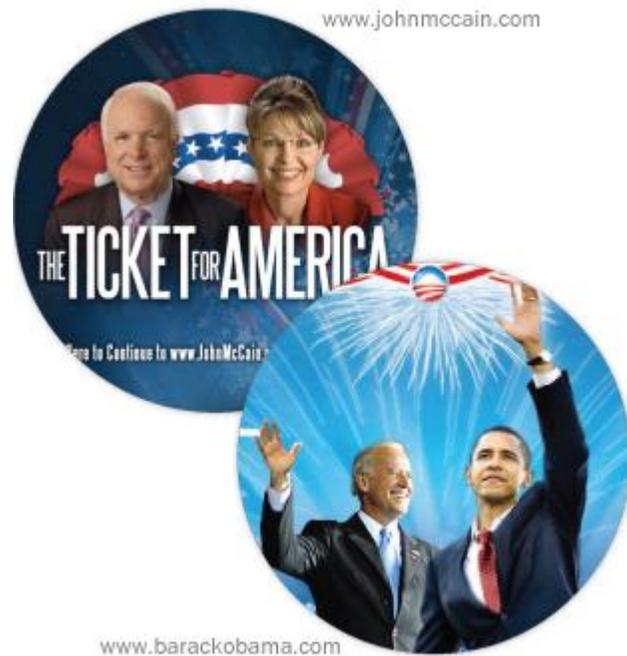
The web was still heavily text-oriented, even at television-based sites. Five of the 10 sites offered no audio and visual links to multimedia content, including CNN. The ones that did often used more limited technology than in 2000.

2008 ([Report link](#))

Barack Obama (D) vs. John McCain (R)

By the 2008 election season, the presidential candidates had begun in earnest to use digital tools to communicate directly with the public. All 19 of the candidates for president had websites; blogs and social media were the hot new formats and opened up a wide array of opportunities for voters to connect and participate.

With that in mind, our analysis of the 2008 election moved from analyzing news media sites to analyzing the candidates' own websites as news and information resources. The study of 19 presidential campaign websites over a period of a month from May to June 2007 found that:



Blogs took the 2008 election by storm. Fully 15 of the 19 candidates had official campaign blogs on their sites, and two of the four who did not have blogs offered similar participatory alternatives: user-based forums or links to outside blogs.

Social networking sites also entered the fray as a way to connect. Myspace, Facebook, YouTube, Meetup and Flickr served as connection points with voters, and at the time Myspace ruled the pack: 16 of the 19 candidates linked on their campaign websites to an official Myspace account. The number of followers (referred to as “friends” on that site) was far short of the numbers we see today. Obama was the only candidate to exceed 100,000; most had fewer than 40,000.

At the same time, though, candidate websites were not bypassing mainstream press. All but one of the sites included mainstream news articles in their regularly updated content.

Citizens had ample ways to join in. Information for initiating grassroots activities was common: 12 sites helped supporters organize community events and eight provided supporters

with tools for hosting fundraisers. And, in addition to their own blogs, more than a third of the sites (seven of 19) encouraged supporters to start their own blogs connected to the campaign.

Of the various voter tools studied, the least common one offered was information on registering to vote. Only four of the 19 candidates had this information on their sites. On the other hand, biographical information was featured prominently on all 19 candidate sites, as were issue pages.

Video became a bigger part of the information stream. Fully 17 of the 19 candidates featured video components on their front pages, indicating an emphasis on audiovisual content that was not evident in studies of previous elections. This came as YouTube, which debuted in 2005, became a striking new venue for candidates to post longer videos than in conventional political advertising.

2012 ([Report link](#))

Barack Obama (D) vs. Mitt Romney (R)

By 2012, the candidates' campaign communications were just as much about bypassing the filter of traditional media as about mastering changing technologies to get their message to the voters.

An examination of content published on the social media platforms and websites of presidential candidates Barack Obama and Mitt Romney over two weeks in June 2012 found:

A reduced role for traditional news

media: The Obama website no longer had a “news” section with recent media reports.

Instead, the only news came directly from the campaign itself. Romney's website still

contained a page dedicated to news media accounts which either spoke positively of Romney or negatively of Obama.

Large gaps emerged between the campaign's technological advancement and level of digital activity.

Overall, the Obama campaign's activity far outpaced Romney's.

Obama, for example, had public accounts on nine separate

social platforms in June, versus five for the Romney campaign,

and posted nearly four times as much content as the Romney campaign. In general, the Romney campaign put more emphasis on Facebook and blogs, while the Obama campaign was most active on Twitter.

People were offered many ways to tailor campaign news to their interests –

especially on Obama's website – and were strongly encouraged to take action on- or

offline. Obama's campaign allowed users to customize their digital interactions by offering 18 different constituency groups (such as blacks, women or young Americans). And about half of each candidate's posts – whether in their blogs or social media account – included a request for some



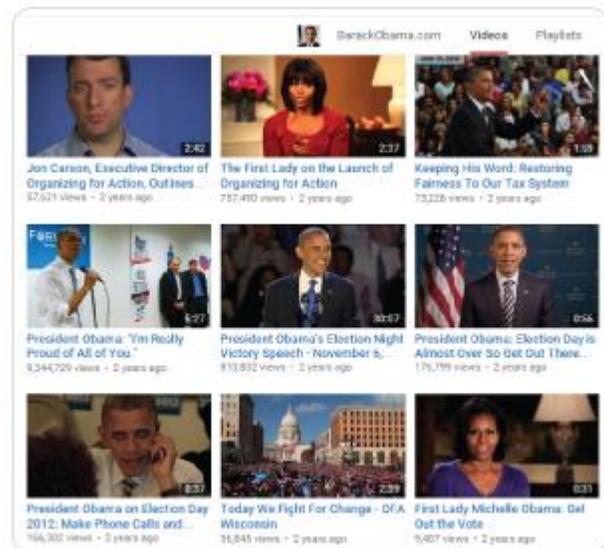
kind of voter follow-up activity. Every blog post from Obama's campaign included some call to action, whether to donate money, sign up to be part of a team or share something on social media, as did 81% of Romney's homepage content.

But the campaigns rarely engaged directly with the public. Only 3% of Obama's total tweets were retweets from the public, while Romney's single retweet was one of his son's tweets. Obama did give high priority to citizen voices on his campaign news blog, where 42% of the posts were produced by members of the public. Only two Romney blog posts were from members of the public.

Both candidates used social media and their websites to discuss campaign issues.

Half of Obama's digital posts and 40% of Romney's were about domestic issues. The economy was the most prominent subject: Nearly a quarter (24%) of Romney's posts and 19% of Obama's focused on the economy.

Both candidates often included links in their digital posts, but the campaign website was still the hub of digital activity. About half of all posts studied – whether in blogs or social media – contained some kind of link (44% for Romney and 51% for Obama). The vast majority took users to another part of the campaign's controlled communications (71% of Obama links, 76% of Romney links), rather than to an external, independent or verifying source. Only 5% of either candidate's digital posts included links to a traditional news site.



<https://www.youtube.com/barackobama/videos>

2016

Hillary Clinton (D) vs. Donald Trump (R)

Sixteen years after the Center’s first study of digital communication in a presidential campaign, social media is central to candidates’ outreach to the public, changing the role and nature of the campaign website. While the candidate website still serves as a hub for information and organization, it has become leaner and less interactive compared with four years ago. Campaigns are active on social media though even here the message remains a very controlled one, leaving fewer ways overall for most voters to engage and take part.

Two separate studies examining the [campaign websites](#) of Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump from May 1-June 15, 2016, and on [Facebook and Twitter](#) from May 11-May 31, 2016, find that:

Clinton’s campaign has almost entirely bypassed the news media while Trump draws heavily on news articles. Clinton’s website offers two main sections for campaign news updates, both of which mimic the look and feel of a digital news publisher, but oriented

around original content produced in-house. Trump, on the other hand, mostly posts stories from outside news media on his website. This pattern is also evident on social media, where 78% of Trump’s links in Facebook posts send readers to news media stories while 80% of Clinton’s direct followers to campaign pages. On Twitter, a similar tendency emerges in what each links to. Sanders, for the most part, falls in between the two.



On websites, citizen content is minimized or excluded altogether; in social media, Trump stands out for highlighting posts by members of the public.

Unlike previous cycles, none of the sites offers the user the option to create a personal fundraising page, nor do their news verticals have comment sections. And only Sanders affords supporters the ability to make calls on his behalf, offering customized scripts; the other candidates limit outreach to donation requests and email and volunteer sign-ups. Moreover, it was rare for any of the three to repost material on social media from outsiders (there were almost no re-shares on Facebook and only about two-in-ten tweets from any of the candidates were retweets). Only Trump tended to include members of the public in his reposts: 78% of his retweets were from members of the public, compared with none of Clinton's and 2% of Sanders'. Trump's focus on the public also stands apart from 2012, when only 3% of Obama's tweets during the period studied and none of Romney's retweeted members of the general public.



None of the three websites featured any distinct section addressing specific voting groups or segments of the population – a popular feature of campaign websites in 2008 and 2012. In 2012, Obama's campaign offered opportunities to join 18 different constituency groups, while visitors to Romney's website could choose from nine different voter group pages. In 2008, both candidates offered around 20 such dedicated pages. In 2016, this feature is no longer present. There are still "issue" pages which explain the candidate's position on certain issues but do not allow for longer-term ways for voters to identify with the candidate or connect with other supporters.

Facebook and Twitter usher in a new age in audiovisual capabilities. Candidates were already experimenting with regularly posting videos in 2008 and 2012 as YouTube increased in popularity, though to a minimal degree. By contrast, Clinton posted about five videos a day on Facebook and Twitter during the time period studied and embedded video in about a quarter of

both her total tweets and Facebook posts. Trump, who averaged about one video a day on social media, was least likely to include regularly updated videos on either social platform (only 2% of his tweets, for example).

Acknowledgments

This report was made possible by The Pew Charitable Trusts. Pew Research Center is a subsidiary of The Pew Charitable Trusts, its primary funder.

This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals. Director of Journalism Research Amy Mitchell oversaw the effort and wrote the overview. Pew Research Center researchers conducted data analysis and aggregation and also served as primary writers for the separate sections as follows:

- Presidential candidates' changing relationship with the web – Jesse Holcomb, Associate Director of Research and Jessica Mahone, Temporary Research Associate
- Candidates differ in their use of social media to connect with the public – Galen Stocking, Research Associate and Michael Barthel, Research Associate
- Digital news developments in U.S. presidential campaigns, 2000-2016 – Amy Mitchell, Director of Journalism Research, Kristine Lu, Research Assistant and Katerina Eva Matsa, Senior Researcher

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Methodology

Website Analysis Methodology

This study examined the campaign websites of presidential candidates [Donald Trump](#), [Hillary Clinton](#) and [Bernie Sanders](#) through an audit of design features, static content and original news items (news articles, press releases and videos) posted to their websites from May 1 through June 15, 2016. During this period, there were 220 original news items that consistently loaded and therefore allowed analysis.

The website audit examined each platform in late June.

This part of the analysis was an audit of design features and static content of the campaign websites, both to compare across the three candidates and to contrast with a similar audit of the campaign websites of Barack Obama and Mitt Romney conducted in 2012.

A preliminary test audit was conducted on May 9, 2016. A first formal audit was conducted on June 21-22, 2016. A second informal audit was conducted on June 29, 2016, to look for any changes, updates or redesigns to the sites.

The websites were captured using a program called Snagit and analyzed for the following variables:

- **Grassroots involvement:** This variable reflects the ways a visitor/supporter may become involved with the campaign. Researchers examined sites for whether they contained an event calendar, a fundraising page, an option to make calls for the candidate, sample scripts for making calls, options to choose states or issues to make calls about, an option to send tweets for the candidate, the ability to host events, links and information about registering to vote, a link to donate, the opportunity to contribute to a citizen blog or the ability to comment on the candidate's content.
- **Social networking:** This variable reflects the ways a visitor/supporter may become involved with the candidate's social media. Researchers looked for the existence of social media feeds and designated how many and which social media sites the campaign used.
- **Newsroom:** This variable reflects the ways the campaign delivers news and engages with the news media. Researchers checked for whether the site offers press releases, news articles, blog posts and videos.
- **Targeting:** This variable reflects the way a visitor/supporter may join different state, voter and issue groups to get tailored information based on the state chosen. Researchers looked for

specific pages offering customized content for citizens in individual states or for the option to customize site content according to location as well as pages about specific issues and targeting specific voter groups.

Researchers captured content posted to the campaign websites during the period studied by saving HTML versions of the webpages containing these posts. Only content originating with the campaigns was captured for analysis. This excluded content from the Trump website’s “In the News” section, which reposted mainstream news articles about the candidate, and the Sanders website section “Democracy Daily,” which reposted digital news content from mainstream and liberal outlets.

Social Media Analysis Methodology

This analysis examined the social media activity of the three major party U.S. presidential candidates still vying for their party’s nomination by mid-May 2016. For this project, researchers analyzed publicly available data for the 389 Facebook posts and the 714 tweets left by these candidates on their campaign’s official Facebook and Twitter accounts from May 11-31, 2016, as well as metrics describing the public response to these posts.

Data acquisition

Before collecting data, the researchers identified the candidates’ official campaign accounts. Links to these accounts were provided by the campaigns’ main websites.

Donald Trump

- <https://www.facebook.com/DonaldTrump/>
- <https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/>

Hillary Clinton

- <https://www.facebook.com/hillaryclinton/>
- <http://twitter.com/HillaryClinton/>

Bernie Sanders

- <https://www.facebook.com/berniesanders/>
- <http://twitter.com/BernieSanders/>

Each candidate’s posts and tweets were collected through the Facebook and Twitter APIs using a custom script that captured data at least two days after the post time, and no more than one week after the post time, between May 17 and June 3, 2016. The API provided the full text of each post, along with the number and type of audience reactions (likes, retweets, shares, etc.), as well as

metadata about the post such as when it was posted, if it was a retweet or contained any links, who was mentioned, etc. (see below).

Each time the script ran, it updated the number of audience responses for posts and tweets previously captured. To ensure we captured a comparable and relatively complete set of data, each post's final number of reactions was capped at one week after the original post date. [We have found in the past](#) that, at least on Facebook, attention tends to dwindle 24 hours after the post date, so this technique likely captured the vast majority of responses.

Variables

Some characteristics of the posts were provided by the API, while others were the result of hand coding by our team of human coders.

- **Interactions:** These were provided by the API. For each post, the Facebook API provides the number of shares, comments and reactions (reactions are a sum of traditional “likes” and Facebook’s more recently added reactions, such as “haha” or “sad”). The Twitter API provides the tweet along with the number of times it has been retweeted. In the analysis of how often each candidates’ posts were retweeted, only those tweets originally sent by the candidates themselves were included.
- **Links:** All links were extracted from post metadata or from the text of the post itself. Twitter reports all links in each tweet in its metadata, but Facebook only reports the primary link (the link for which a preview becomes embedded in the post), and does not report any other links included in the text. There were a very small number of posts in which this occurred; for these, we did a [regular expression](#) search for any additional links.
 - Additionally, many of the posted links were shortened versions of the links. In some instances, the platform expanded the link; when it did not, researchers used a script to automatically expand the link. This script simulated repeated calls to the link shortening service until it arrived at the final destination. For example, a link like [pewrsr.ch/29qHL48](#) would expand to a link to a report on Pew Research Center’s website (e.g. [http://pewresearch.org/...](#)).
 - After all links were fully expanded, they were aggregated to the domain level (e.g. [pewresearch.org](#)) and coded by human coders.
- **Retweets:** All retweets that the candidates posted were identified and the original user extracted. For Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton, Twitter identified the retweet and researchers were able to extract all information about the retweet from the tweet’s metadata. Donald Trump only used the built-in retweet functionality for two tweets during this period, instead opting to retweet manually (i.e. by copying and pasting the text of another user’s tweet

directly into a new post, and adding the username of the person being retweeted). Researchers identified the pattern for his retweets and built a script that searched through the texts of his tweets using the regular expression ‘^”@(\S*):’ (not including single quotes). Both these manual retweets and built-in retweets were counted for Trump.

- For both kinds of retweets, the original Twitter user was extracted and coded by human coders (see below).
- **Facebook shares:** Researchers manually looked for all Facebook posts that had been shared.
- **@mentions:** On both Twitter and Facebook, users can include a link to another user in the text of their message using each service’s built-in functionality – @-mentioning on Twitter, [mentioning or tagging](#) on Facebook. These were extracted from the metadata as well. The Twitter API includes the retweeted user for retweeted tweets in the @-mentions section of the metadata; these were excluded for both manual retweets and built-in retweets.
 - All mentioned users were coded by human coders (see below).
- **Candidate co-mentions:** The number of posts in which the candidate mentioned one of the other two candidates (with and without links to the other’s account) were calculated using keyword searches for all variations of the candidates’ names on all posts and tweets.
- **Language:** Post language was determined by [langdetect](#), a port of Google’s [language detection algorithm](#), and all non-English posts were hand-checked.
- **Videos:** Researchers counted Twitter and Facebook videos by hand.

Human coding

Researchers developed and tested a codebook (modeled on the codebook used in the [2012 study](#)) to classify links, mentions of other individuals or groups, and retweets. A team of three coders later coded the domain from all links, as well as all retweeted and mentioned users. In order to ensure the validity of the codebook, intercoder testing was conducted on both links and mentioned and retweeted users (retweeted and mentioned users used the same coding scheme). Three human coders coded 25 randomly sampled links and 25 randomly sampled Twitter users (both retweeted and mentioned users); two human coders coded 41 Facebook user mentions. When coding links, the coders achieved a Fleiss’ kappa (a variant of Cohen’s kappa allowing for multiple coders) of 1. For retweeted and mentioned users on Twitter, the coders achieved a Fleiss’ kappa of 0.96. For mentioned users on Facebook, the coders achieved a Cohen’s kappa of 0.91, and the discrepancies between the coders were resolved by researchers.

Survey 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 analysis are drawn from the June wave of the panel, conducted June 7-July 5, 2016, among 4,602 respondents (4,172 by web and 430 by mail). The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 4,602 respondents is plus or minus 2.3 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.¹³ 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.¹⁴

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 multi-step 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, 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 July-December 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

¹³ 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.

¹⁴ 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.

to 2016 from the 2013 Current Population Survey Computer and Internet Use Supplement. 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:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	4,602	2.3 percentage points

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 June wave had a response rate of 82% (4,172 responses among 5,071 web-based individuals in the panel); the mail component had a response rate of 75% (430 responses among 574 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 June ATP wave is 2.9%¹⁵.

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¹⁵ 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.

Topline questionnaire

Election 2016 Website Analysis Campaign website audit topline July 2016 Pew Research Center

Post frequency

Average # of original or externally produced news items posted per day

2012		2016		
Obama	Romney	Clinton	Sanders	Trump
8	4	2	3	3

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the official presidential campaign websites of major party candidates from August 6-September 9, 2008, June 4-17, 2012 and May 1-June 15, 2016.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Social media use across the past three election cycles

Links to social networking sites present on campaign websites

	2008		2012			2016	
	Obama	McCain	Obama	Romney	Clinton	Sanders	Trump
Facebook	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Twitter			x	x	x	x	x
YouTube	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Instagram			x		x	x	x
Pinterest			x		x		
Tumblr			x			x	
Google+			x	x			
Flickr	x	x	x	x			
Spotify			x				
Myspace	x	x					

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of the official presidential campaign websites of major party candidates from August 6-September 9, 2008, June 4-17, 2012 and May 1-June 15, 2016.

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Election 2016 Social Media Analysis
Content Analysis Topline
July 2016
Pew Research Center

1a. Overall posting frequency

Across the three weeks, total number of ...

	Trump	Clinton	Sanders
Facebook posts	125	153	111
Tweets	240	228	246

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of posts on Facebook and Twitter from May 11-31, 2016

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

1b. Audience response

Across the three weeks, average number of ...

	Trump	Clinton	Sanders
Facebook reactions	76,885	12,537	31,830
Facebook comments	5,230	1,729	1,070
Facebook shares	8,367	1,636	6,341
Twitter retweets	5,947	1,581	2,463

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of posts on Facebook and Twitter from May 11-31, 2016

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

1c. Total links, mentions, and retweets

Total number and percentage of posts/tweets containing ...

	Trump		Clinton		Sanders	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Facebook						
Links	37	30	46	30	36	32
Shares of other users' posts	0	0	0	0	2	2
Formal mentions	23	18	27	18	4	4
Twitter						
Links	23	10	79	35	89	36
Retweets of other users' tweets	55	23	35	15	50	20
@-mentions	92	38	46	20	19	8

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of posts on Facebook and Twitter from May 11-31, 2016

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

2a. Facebook links

Of all links, number and percentage going to ...

	Trump		Clinton		Sanders	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Campaign site	0	0	37	80	21	58
News media	29	78	7	15	12	33
Other	8	22	2	4	3	8

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of posts on Facebook from May 11-31, 2016

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

2b. Twitter links

Of all links, number and percentage going to ...

	Trump		Clinton		Sanders	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Campaign site	5	20	49	60	51	57
News media	12	48	20	25	33	37
Other	8	32	12	15	6	7

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of posts on Twitter from May 11-31, 2016

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

3. Retweets

Of all tweets that are retweets, number and proportion going to ...

	Trump		Clinton		Sanders	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Own campaign/campaign staff	0	0	28	80	4	8
Candidate's family	0	0	0	0	1	2
Donald Trump	0	0	0	0	0	0
Hillary Clinton	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bernie Sanders	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other politician	0	0	2	6	0	0
Government agency	0	0	0	0	2	4
Non-governmental institution or organization	1	2	1	3	3	6
News media	10	18	4	11	33	66
Celebrity	1	2	0	0	6	12
Citizens	43	78	0	0	1	2
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of posts on Twitter from May 11-31, 2016

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

4a. Candidate references to other candidates

Number of posts/tweets that ...

	Trump	Clinton	Sanders
Facebook			
Trump refers to...	N/A	38	5
Clinton refers to...	45	N/A	0
Sanders refers to...	17	10	N/A
Twitter			
Trump refers to...	N/A	46	12
Clinton refers to...	92	N/A	0
Sanders refers to...	19	10	N/A

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of posts on Facebook and Twitter from May 11-31, 2016

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

4b. Mentions of other users on Facebook

Of all uses of the built-in mention functionality to link to another user's Facebook page, number and percentage going to ...

	Trump		Clinton		Sanders	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Own campaign/campaign staff	0	0	2	6	0	0
Candidate's family	8	28	0	0	0	0
Donald Trump	0	0	13	39	0	0
Hillary Clinton	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bernie Sanders	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other politician	4	14	4	12	2	50
Government agency	0	0	1	3	0	0
Non-governmental institution or organization	1	3	3	9	0	0
News media	11	38	4	12	0	0
Celebrity	5	17	6	18	2	50
Citizens	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of posts on Facebook from May 11-31, 2016

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

4c. Mentions of other users on Twitter

Of all the @-mention links to another user in a tweet, number and percentage going to ...

	Trump		Clinton		Sanders	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Own campaign/campaign staff	0	0	2	4	2	10
Candidate's family	1	1	0	0	0	0
Donald Trump	0	0	16	32	1	5
Hillary Clinton	1	1	0	0	1	5
Bernie Sanders	1	1	0	0	0	0
Other politician	6	5	7	14	5	24
Government agency	6	5	1	2	1	5
Non-governmental institution or organization	9	8	10	20	1	5
News media	81	72	8	16	7	33
Celebrity	2	2	6	12	3	14
Citizens	4	4	0	0	0	0
Other	1	1	0	0	0	0

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of posts on Twitter from May 11-31, 2016

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

5. Spanish-language posts

Total number and percentage of posts/tweets in Spanish on ...

	Trump		Clinton		Sanders	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Facebook	0	0	23	15	4	4
Twitter	0	0	14	6	13	5

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of posts on Facebook and Twitter from May 11-31, 2016

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

6. Videos

Total number and percentage of posts/tweets containing videos ...

	Trump		Clinton		Sanders	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Facebook	16	13	35	23	23	21
Twitter	4	2	62	27	21	9

Source: Pew Research Center analysis of posts on Facebook and Twitter from May 11-31, 2016

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

2016 PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL
WAVE 18 June
FINAL TOPLINE
June 7 – July 5, 2016
TOTAL N= 4,602
WEB RESPONDENTS N=4,172
MAIL RESPONDENTS N=430¹⁶

ASK ALL:

CANDCNTCT So far in the presidential campaign, have you turned to any of the following for news and information about the campaign and candidates?

[Check all that apply] **[RANDOMIZE A&B, C&D, E&F, AND RANDOMIZE IN BLOCKS; EXCLUSIVE PUNCH ALWAYS LAST]**

	<u>Selected</u>	<u>Not selected</u> <u>/No answer</u>
a. Emails from the Hillary Clinton campaign June 7-July 5,2016	7	93
b. Emails from the Donald Trump campaign June 7-July 5,2016	3	97
c. Social media posts from the Hillary Clinton campaign, such as on Twitter or Facebook June 7-July 5,2016	17	83
d. Social media posts from the Donald Trump campaign, such as on Twitter or Facebook June 7-July 5,2016	17	83
e. The Hillary Clinton campaign website June 7-July 5,2016	7	93
f. The Donald Trump campaign website June 7-July 5,2016	6	94
g. None of these [EXCLUSIVE PUNCH] June 7-July 5,2016	68	32

¹⁶ 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.