



News Consumption Patterns Among Americans in 2025: Platforms, Formats, Generational Differences, and Trust Dynamics

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The Civic Data & Research Institute is a nonpartisan research organization dedicated to data-driven analysis and public education on civic and public policy issues affecting the general public. This report examines contemporary patterns in news consumption among U.S. adults, drawing primarily on surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center and Gallup in 2025. It analyzes dominant platforms, preferred formats, generational variations, trust in media sources, and broader implications for civic information flows in a digital media ecosystem.

Executive Summary

In 2025, American news consumption is characterized by digital dominance, platform fragmentation, and significant generational divides. Social media serves as a regular news source for a substantial portion of adults, with Facebook and YouTube each cited by 38% as frequent platforms, while TikTok has seen remarkable growth, reaching 20% of adults overall and 43% of those under 30. Television retains relevance, particularly among older cohorts, with 32% often obtaining news through it.

Preferred formats favor visual content, with 44% of adults expressing a preference for watching news over reading or listening. However, overall engagement has declined, with only 36% following news closely in 2025, down from 51% in 2016. Trust in mass media stands at historic lows, with Gallup reporting 28% confidence and Pew noting 56% trust in national news organizations—a drop of 11 points since early 2025.

These trends underscore challenges to shared civic discourse, including risks of misinformation and polarization, while highlighting opportunities for adaptive journalism in engaging younger audiences.

Introduction

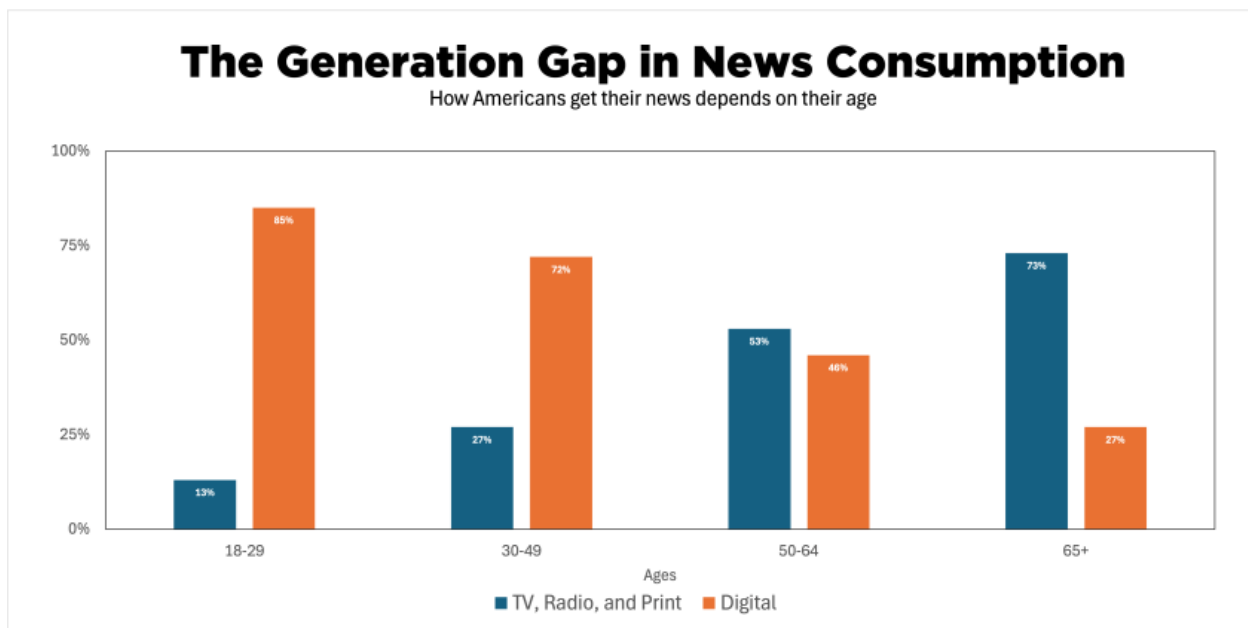
The evolution of media technologies has profoundly reshaped how individuals access and engage with news, transitioning from traditional broadcast and print models to multifaceted digital ecosystems. In 2025, this landscape features algorithmic curation, short-form video content, and incidental exposure, complicating the role of journalism in democratic societies.

This analysis synthesizes findings from Pew Research Center surveys (including waves from August and September 2025) and Gallup's media trust tracking. Key dimensions include platform utilization, format preferences, age-based disparities, trust erosion, and emergent patterns such as influencer reliance. By contextualizing these data, the report illuminates implications for information equity and public deliberation.

Declining Intensity of News Engagement

A notable trend is the reduction in active news-following. Pew data indicate that 36% of U.S. adults follow news all or most of the time in 2025, representing a substantial decline from 51% in 2016. This attenuation spans political affiliations and demographics, though it is more pronounced among younger individuals.

Incidental exposure partially offsets intentional seeking, with many encountering news unexpectedly via algorithms or social feeds.



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News Consumption by Media Type: The Digital Shift That's Narrowing ...

Dominant Platforms and Pathways

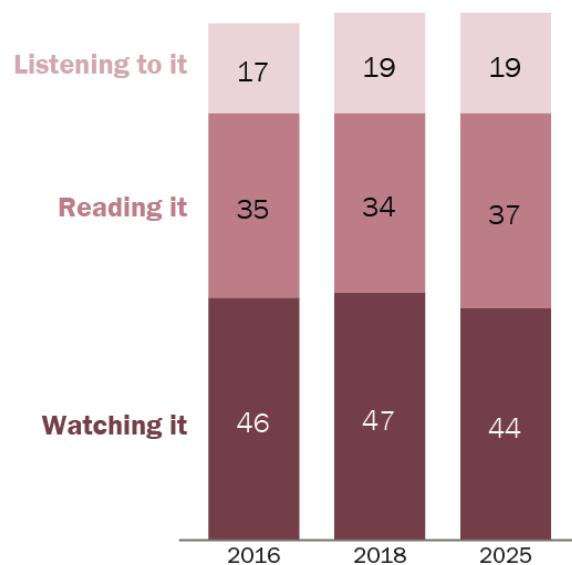
Digital devices constitute the primary conduit, with high proportions accessing news via smartphones, tablets, or computers. Television persists as a significant source, used often by 32% for news.

Social media's integration is evident, with 53-54% obtaining news there at least occasionally. Leading platforms include Facebook and YouTube (38% regular use each), followed by emerging sites like TikTok.

<i>Platform</i>	<i>Percentage Regularly Obtaining News (%)</i>	<i>Key Observations</i>
<i>Facebook</i>	38	Stable across demographics
<i>YouTube</i>	38	Video-centric appeal
<i>TikTok</i>	20 (overall); 43 (under 30)	Sharpest growth trajectory
<i>Instagram</i>	Approximately 20-25	Youth-oriented

TikTok's ascent—from 3% in 2020 to 20% in 2025—represents the most rapid expansion among tracked platforms.

% of U.S. adults who say they prefer to get their news by ...

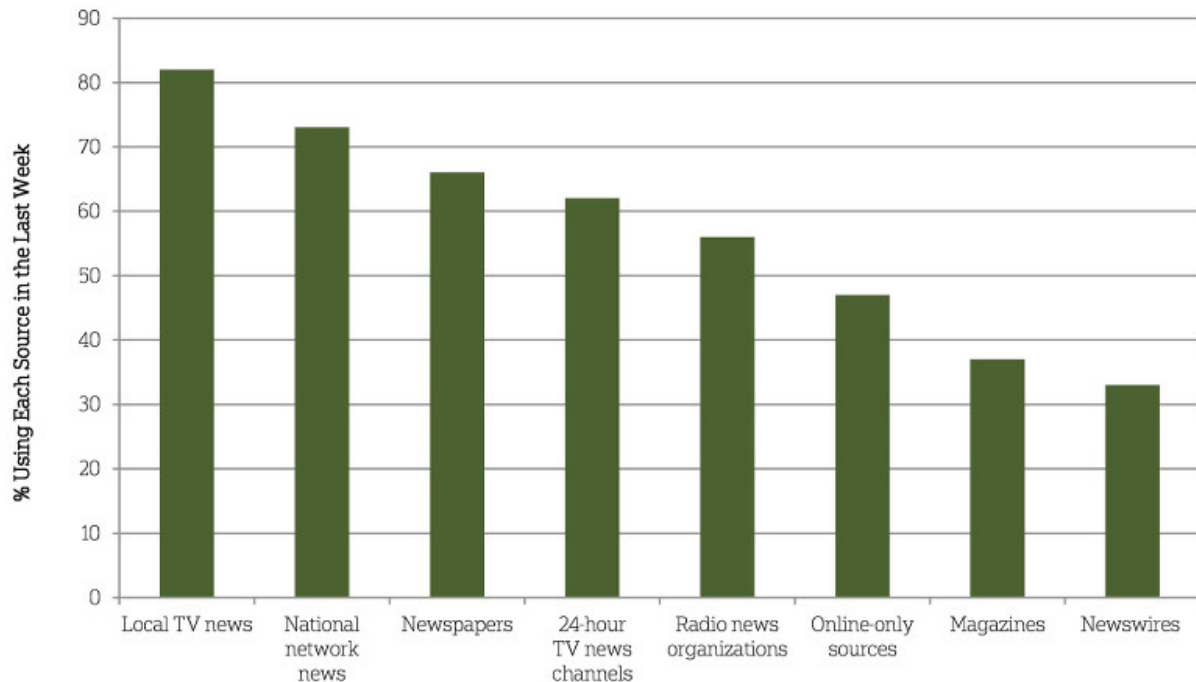


[pewresearch.org](https://www.pewresearch.org)

Format Preferences: Visual Dominance

Visual consumption prevails, with 44% preferring to watch news rather than read or listen. This preference is age-dependent, peaking at 57% among those 65 and older, often aligned with television viewing.

Among watchers, traditional TV remains favored (62%), though streaming services gain traction.



americanpressinstitute.org

How Americans get their news - American Press Institute

Generational Variations in Consumption Habits

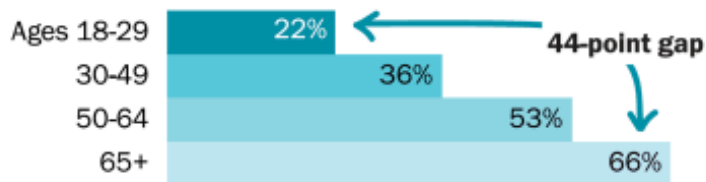
Age emerges as a primary differentiator. Young adults (18-29) exhibit the lowest intentional engagement, with only 15% following news closely, compared to 62% of those 65 and older.

Youth favor social and nontraditional sources: 43% regularly use TikTok for news, substantial proportions rely on Instagram and YouTube, and 39% obtain news from influencers. Incidental political news exposure is high (70%), and trust in social media information approximates that in national outlets.

Older cohorts prioritize television and local sources, maintaining higher overall engagement.

Young adults intentionally seek out news less often than older adults

% of U.S. adults who say they intentionally seek out news *often* or *extremely often*

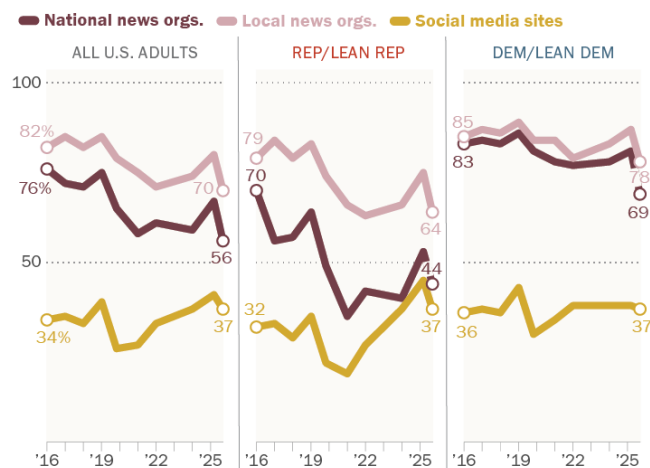


Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted March 10-16, 2025.

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% of U.S. adults who say they have *a lot of/some trust* in the information they get from ...



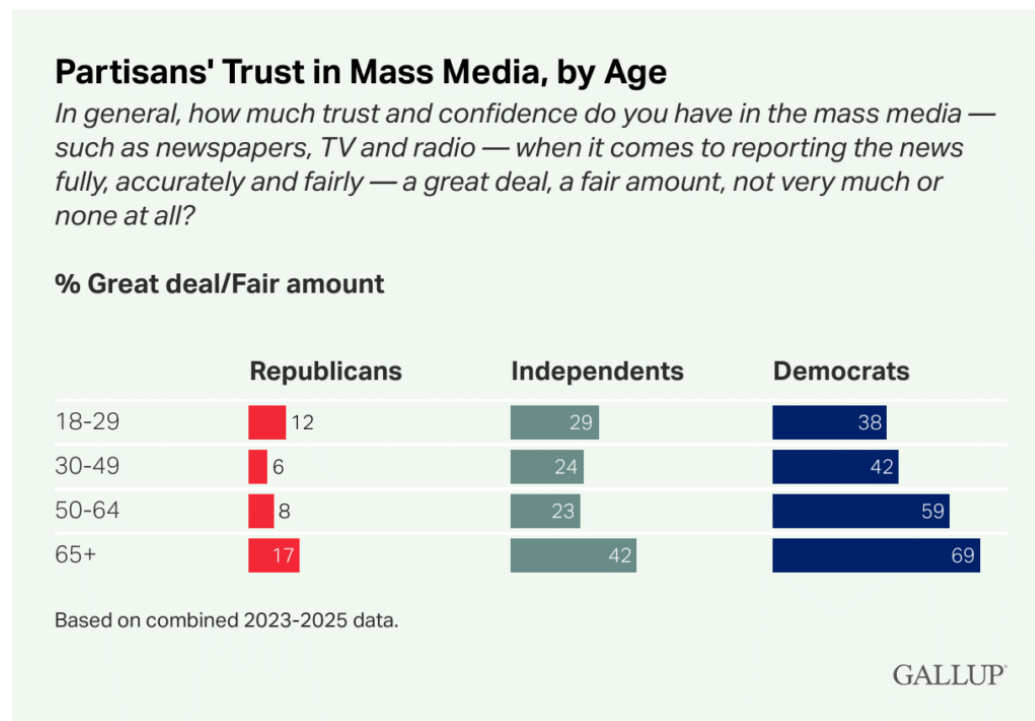
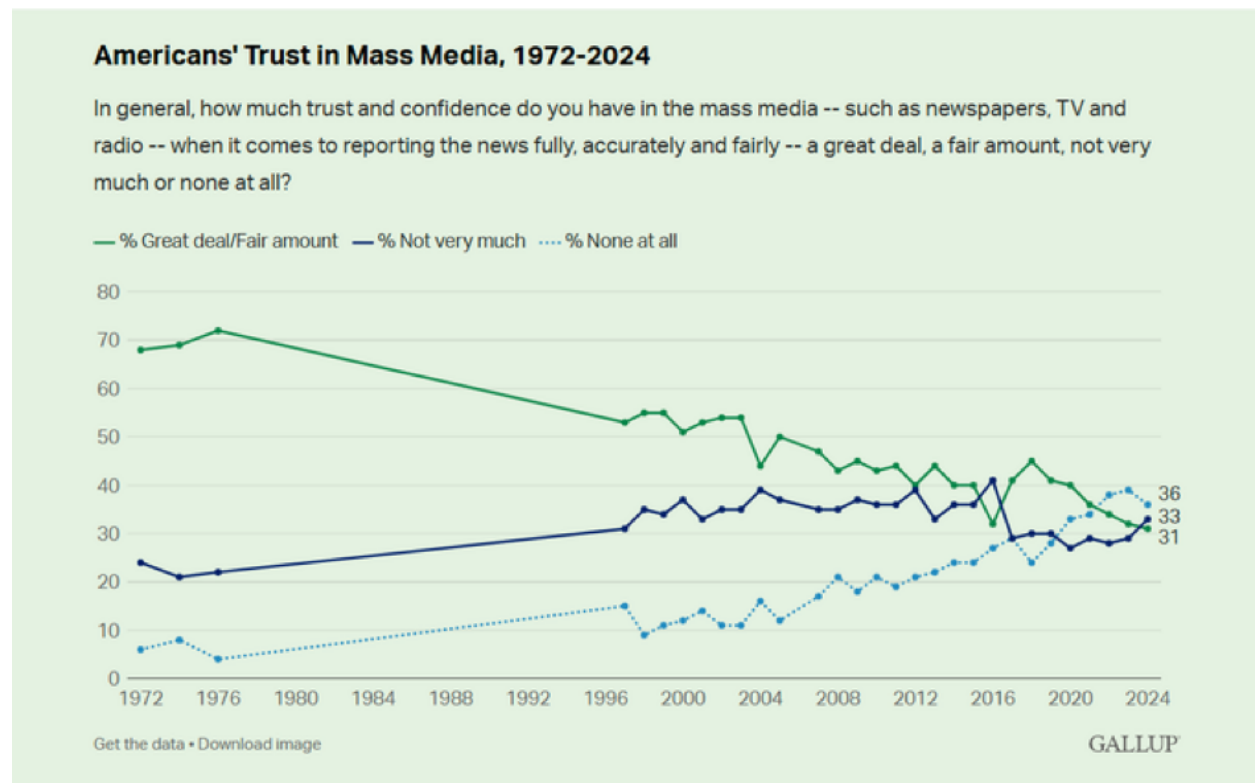
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These disparities portend a future media environment oriented toward short-form, personalized, and influencer-mediated content.

Trust in Media Sources: Erosion and Polarization

Confidence in media has reached unprecedented lows. Gallup reports 28% expressing a great deal or fair amount of trust in mass media, while Pew finds 56% trusting national news organizations—a decline of 11 points since March 2025.

Partisan asymmetries are acute: Republicans register single-digit trust (8%), contrasting with higher Democratic levels (51%). Generational declines contribute, particularly among youth and middle-aged groups.



Emerging Patterns and Broader Implications

Influencers and podcasts attract growing audiences, especially younger ones. News avoidance increases, attributed to overload and polarization.

Algorithmic curation fosters personalization but risks echo chambers. Declining shared sources may undermine common factual baselines essential for civic cohesion.

Opportunities persist in innovative formats to recapture engagement, particularly among disaffected demographics.

Conclusion

The patterns of news consumption observed in 2025 reveal a media ecosystem in profound transition, marked by the ascendance of digital and social platforms, a pronounced preference for visual formats, deepening generational cleavages, and historically low levels of institutional trust. While technological advancements have democratized access to information and enabled unprecedented personalization, they have simultaneously contributed to fragmentation, incidental exposure, and the erosion of shared informational commons.

These developments carry significant ramifications for democratic functioning. Reduced intentional news-following, coupled with reliance on algorithmically curated and influencer-driven content among younger cohorts, heightens vulnerabilities to misinformation, selective exposure, and polarized worldviews. The widening partisan and generational trust gaps further complicate efforts to sustain public discourse grounded in verifiable facts.

Nevertheless, the data also point toward constructive pathways. The enduring appeal of local news sources in certain contexts, the potential of engaging video formats, and opportunities for journalistic innovation suggest avenues for rebuilding engagement and credibility. Policymakers, media organizations, and educators must prioritize media literacy initiatives, algorithmic transparency, support for quality journalism, and strategies tailored to re-engage disaffected demographics.

Ultimately, preserving an informed citizenry in this evolving landscape demands vigilant, evidence-based responses that balance innovation with safeguards for informational integrity and civic cohesion.

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