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# The Role of News on Facebook

*Common yet Incidental*

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## Overview

On Facebook, the largest social media platform, news is a common but incidental experience, according to an initiative of Pew Research Center in collaboration with the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

Overall, about half of adult Facebook users, 47%, “ever” get news there. That amounts to 30% of the population.

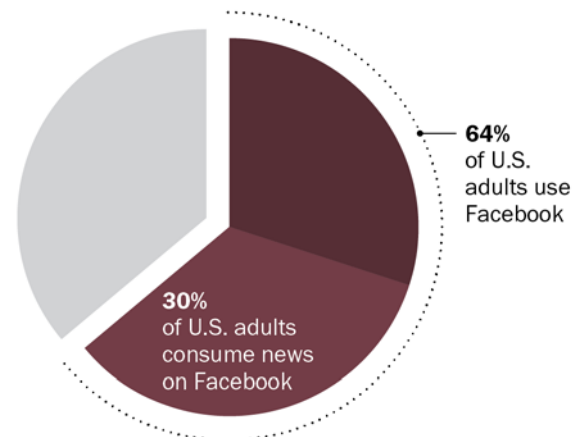
Most U.S. adults do not go to Facebook seeking news out, the nationally representative online survey of 5,173 adults finds. Instead, the vast majority of Facebook news consumers, 78%, get news when they are on Facebook for other reasons. And just 4% say it is the most important way they get news. As one respondent summed it up, “I believe Facebook is a good way to find out news without actually looking for it.”

However, the survey provides evidence that Facebook exposes some people to news who otherwise might not get it. While only 38% of heavy news followers who get news on Facebook say the site is an important way they get news, that figure rises to 47% among those who follow the news less often. “If it wasn't for Facebook news,” wrote one respondent, “I'd probably never really know what's going on in the world because I don't have time to keep up with the news on a bunch of different locations.”

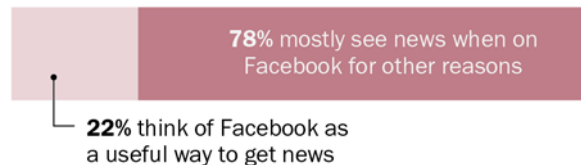
In particular, younger adults, who as a group are less engaged than their elders are with news on other platforms, are as engaged, if not more so, with news on Facebook. Young people (18- to 29-year-olds) account for about a third, 34%, of Facebook news consumers. That far outpaces the 20% that they account for among Facebook users who do not get news on the site.

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### Facebook and News



*Of the 30% of U.S. adults who consume news on Facebook...*



Facebook News Survey Aug. 21-Sept. 2, 2013

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What's more, these 18- to 29-year-olds get news on Facebook across topics at roughly the same levels as older age groups, turn there as often for breaking news and deem the site as important a source of news.

All in all, then, it may be the very incidental nature of the site that ultimately exposes more people to news there. Indeed, the more time one spends on the site, the more likely they are to get news there. Two-thirds (67%) of those who use Facebook for at least an hour a day get news there compared with only 41% of those who spend less than an hour a day on the site.

These are some of the findings of the survey, which is the first in a multi-part research project by the Pew Research Center, in collaboration with the Knight Foundation, examining the role of news on Facebook and other social media platforms. Among other key findings in this report:

- **Facebook news consumers still access other platforms for news to roughly the same degree as the population overall.** Four-in-ten (42%) Facebook news consumers often watch local television news, as do 46% of all U.S. adults; 23% often watch cable news (compared with 24% of all U.S. adults). But, just 21% of Facebook news consumers often read print newspapers, compared with 27% of the population overall.
- **News consumption on Facebook does not replace other activities.** Those who consume news on Facebook are more active on the site than other users by nearly every measure. Fully 77% are driven to the platform to see what friends are up to (compared with 60% of other Facebook users), 49% go to chat with friends and family (versus 29%) and 26% go to post personal updates (versus 9%). In addition, almost two-thirds (65%) of those who get news on Facebook visit the site several times a day, compared with about three-in-ten (29%) other Facebook users.
- **Roughly half, 49%, of Facebook news consumers report regularly getting news on six or more different topics.** The most popular topic is entertainment news, which 73% of Facebook news consumers get regularly on the site. Close behind is news about events in one's own community (65%). National politics and government rank fourth, reaching 55% of these consumers regularly, just behind sports, which reaches 57% regularly. Still, Facebook has yet to become a platform for learning about news events as they happen. Just 28% of Facebook news consumers have ever turned there for breaking news.
- **Liking or commenting on news stories occurs almost as frequently as clicking on links, though back and forth discussions are less common.** About two-thirds (64%) of Facebook news consumers at least sometimes click on news links (16% do so often). Nearly

as many, 60%, at least sometimes “like” or comment on stories (19% do so often). Just under half, 43% post or share links themselves at least sometimes (10% do so often) and about a third, 32%, discuss issues in the news with other people on Facebook (6% do so often).

- **News outlets rank low in the reasons Facebook news consumers click on news links.** The biggest single reason people cite for clicking on links to news stories is interest in the topic; 70% name this as a major reason to click on news links. About half say finding the story entertaining (51%) or surprising (50%) is a major reason; 37% say a friend’s recommendation is a major reason. On the other hand, that the link came from a news organization they preferred is cited by just 20% as a major reason for clicking – outpacing only that the story had a lot of “likes” (13%).
- **Facebook news consumers who “like” or follow news organizations or journalists show high levels of news engagement on the site.** About a third, 34%, of Facebook news consumers have news organizations or individual journalists in their feeds. Those who do are more likely to see the site as an important way to get news than those who do not have news organizations or journalists in their feed (54% versus 38%). They are also nearly three times as likely to often click on news links (27% versus 10%) and discuss issues in the news with others on Facebook (11% versus 4%). They are twice as likely to often post or share stories (16% versus 7%) and “like” or comment on stories (29% versus 15%).
- **As with U.S. adults overall, only a minority of Facebook news consumers say they prefer news that shares their point of view.** Less than a third, 31%, of Facebook news consumers generally prefer news that shares their own point of view, just slightly higher than the 27% of U.S. adults who say the same. And, when asked about things that bother them on Facebook, twice as many Facebook news consumers are bothered when people post political statements (whether related to the news or not) than when people post opinions about something in the news (32% versus 14%). And, 58% have been surprised by a friend’s or family member’s opinion about an event in the news on the site.
- **Among U.S. adults, the desktop/laptop computer is still the primary way most adults access Facebook.** Fully 59% of all adult Facebook users and 53% of Facebook news consumers mostly access the site through a desktop or laptop computer rather than a mobile device such as a smartphone or tablet. And while the primarily mobile users tend to check in more frequently, desktop users clock more total time: 37% of mainly desktop/laptop Facebook news consumers spend an hour or more a day on the site, compared with 28% of mainly mobile Facebook news consumers.

## About the Survey

This report is based on a Pew Research Center survey conducted Aug. 21-Sept. 2, 2013, among a nationally representative sample of adults 18 years of age or older. The sample comprised 5,173 respondents, 3,268 of whom are Facebook users, of which 1,429 are Facebook news consumers. The survey questionnaire was written by the Pew Research Center and administered by GfK using KnowledgePanel, its nationally representative online research panel.

For questions asked of the full sample of 5,173, the margin of sampling error is plus or minus 1.7 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. For Facebook users, the margin of error is plus or minus 2.2 percentage points; for Facebook news consumers, it is 3.3 percentage points.

Facebook news consumers are defined as those who answered that they “ever get news or news headlines on Facebook.” News is defined as “information about events and issues that involve more than just your friends or family.”

For more details on the survey methodology, see [methodology section](#).

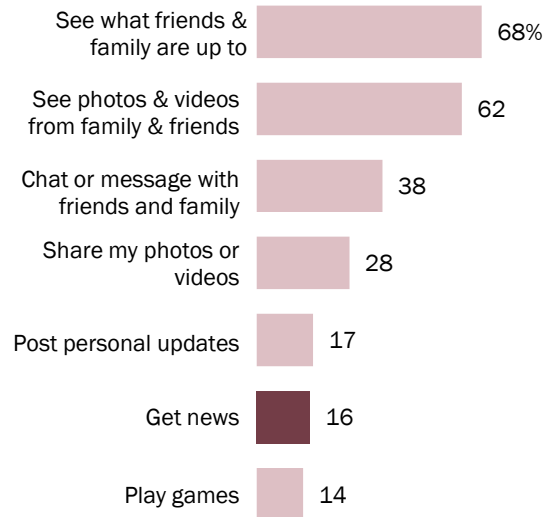
## The Role of News on Facebook

Although Facebook has grown beyond its beginnings as a way to connect people with friends and family, those connections remain the primary reason people go to Facebook.

For 68% of Facebook users, seeing what friends and family are up to is a major reason they go to the site. Nearly as many, 62%, say the same of seeing friends' photos. Less commonly cited reasons include engaging in conversations with friends and family (38%) and sharing one's own photos or videos (28%). And just 16% of Facebook users say getting news is a major reason they use Facebook, on par with the proportion who say posting personal updates (17%) or playing games (14%) are major reasons. One respondent summed it up with, "News on Facebook is just something that happens."

### Reasons People Go to Facebook

*Percent of Facebook Users Who Say Each is a Major Reason They Use Facebook...*



Based on Facebook Users N=3,268  
Facebook News Survey Aug. 21-Sept. 2, 2013.

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Facebook users are split over whether they like having posts about news mixed in with other kinds of posts in their feed (52% enjoy it, 47% do not), but few are particularly bothered by news posts. When asked about things that people do on Facebook that might bother them, just 10% of Facebook users say it bothers them when friends or family post news stories.

They also are not very bothered when people post opinions about news stories (just 16% say they are bothered by this). By contrast, about half of Facebook users are bothered when people share information that is very personal (52%) or brag or complain about their lives (47%), while 37% say it bothers them when friends or family post many times a day, and about as many (35%) are bothered when people post political statements. As one survey respondent put it, "I like being informed of things happening in our nation, I just don't care to hear someone's political agenda!"

The only category less bothersome than posts about news stories is posting pictures of children or pets; just 7% say this bothers them.

Yet, very few of those who get news on Facebook – just 4% – find the social networking site to be the most important way they get news. An additional 39% say it is important, but not the most important. A majority, 57%, say Facebook is not a very important way they get news. As a respondent explained, “For me Facebook is mostly about entertainment, not news. But, if I see a story that interests me, I’ll read it. But Facebook would not be my first choice for news.”

Additionally, the vast majority of people, 78%, who get news on the platform encounter news on Facebook mostly because they are on the site for other reasons. And news on Facebook is not seen as unique to the site; three-quarters, 75%, say that the news they see on Facebook is news they encounter in other places.

Nonetheless, there is a small portion of Facebook news consumers for whom the social media site plays a large role in their news diet. One respondent who is among the 4% who say Facebook is their most important source of news writes that the platform provides “a wider range of news than from any single news source, mostly from links or shares posted by other people.”

Facebook also tends to be of greater value in informing those who do not typically follow news all or most of the time. While 38% of Facebook news consumers who say they follow the news all or most of the time say Facebook is an important way they get news, the figure rises to 46% among those who say they follow news some of the time, and 48% among those who follow news less often.

And, as a reflection of the incidental nature of news on Facebook, the more one is on the site, the more likely they are to get news there. About two-thirds (67%) of those who use Facebook for at least an hour a day get news there, compared with only 41% of those who spend less than an hour a day on the site. And more than half, 57%, say that Facebook is an important way they get news, versus 36% who spend less than an hour a day on Facebook.

Similarly, about two-thirds (68%) of those who check Facebook throughout the day get news there, compared with just a third (32%) of those who check Facebook from time to time.

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## Facebook Seen as a Supplemental News Source

*Percent of Facebook News Consumers Who Say...*

| <b>Facebook is...</b>                                   | <b>%</b> |
|---|----------|
| The most important way I get news                       | 4        |
| An important way I get news, but not the most important | 39       |
| Not a very important way I get news                     | 57       |

### **Which better describes why you get news on Facebook?**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| I think of Facebook as a useful way get news   | 22 |
| I mostly just get news on Facebook because I see it when I’m there for other reasons | 78 |

### **The news on Facebook is...**

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Mostly news I see only on Facebook     | 25 |
| Mostly news I also see in other places | 75 |

Based on Facebook News Consumers N=1,429  
Facebook News Survey Aug. 21-Sept. 2, 2013.  
“Don’t know/refused” responses not shown.

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## Who Uses Facebook for News

### The Young

Demographically, Facebook news consumers are notably young – younger, even, than Facebook users more broadly.

The average adult Facebook news consumer is 39, a full eight years younger than other adults on Facebook and younger than the average U.S. adult.

Further, about a third, 34%, of Facebook news consumers are 18-29 years old, compared with only 20% of other Facebook users.

Younger Facebook news consumers are as engaged in news on the site as other Facebook news consumers are. Facebook news consumers who are 18-29 years old are as likely as older age groups – or more so – to go there for breaking news (32%, compared with 30% among 30- to 49-year-olds and 21% of those 50 and older), to say it is an important way they get news (48%, compared with 44% and 36%, respectively) and to get news across topics at roughly the same levels. Other Pew Research Center data have found this is not the case more broadly. In general, when young people do get news, they tend to be less engaged with that news than are older Americans.

### Profile of the Facebook News Consumer

|                              | Facebook News Consumers<br>% | Other Facebook Users<br>% |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Male                         | 42                           | 46                        |
| Female                       | 58                           | 54                        |
| > \$30,000                   | 22                           | 22                        |
| \$30,000-\$74,999            | 37                           | 37                        |
| \$75,000<                    | 41                           | 42                        |
| 18-29                        | 34                           | 20                        |
| 30-49                        | 39                           | 35                        |
| 50-64                        | 20                           | 29                        |
| 65+                          | 7                            | 16                        |
| High school graduate or less | 39                           | 39                        |
| Some college                 | 31                           | 29                        |
| Bachelor's or more           | 30                           | 33                        |
| White, Non-Hispanic          | 63                           | 71                        |
| Non-white                    | 37                           | 29                        |
| Republican                   | 26                           | 27                        |
| Democrat                     | 38                           | 35                        |
| Independent                  | 30                           | 32                        |
|                              | N=1,429                      | N=1,839                   |

Facebook News Survey Aug. 21-Sept. 2, 2013.

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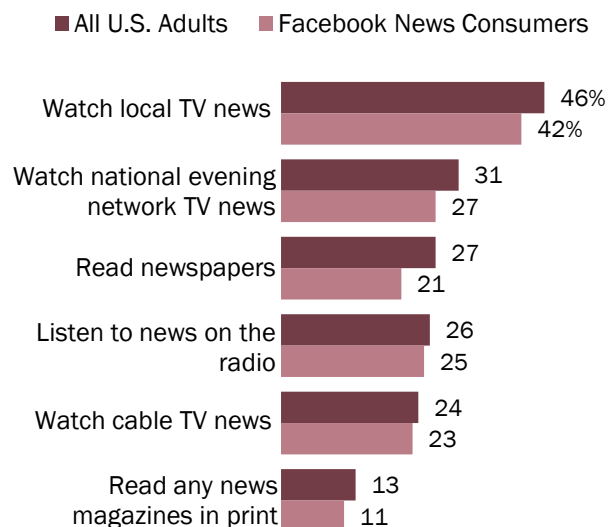


## Followers of News on Other Platforms

Facebook news consumers still get news on other platforms at about the same levels as the population overall. Roughly four-in-ten Facebook news consumers (42%) regularly watch local television news, as do 46% of all U.S. adults; 23% watch cable news (compared with 24% of all U.S. adults); 21% often read print newspapers (compared with 27% of the population overall); 11% read print news magazines (versus 13% of the general population).

And Facebook news consumers differ little from the overall population in the reasons they cite for following the news. Broad majorities say they follow the news because they enjoy talking about the news with family and friends (72%) or out of a sense of civic obligation (67%). Many (60%) also say they follow the news for entertainment or because it improves their lives (54%); just 18% say they follow news because they have to for school or their career.

### Facebook News Consumers as Likely as Others to Get News from Other Sources



Based on General Population (N=5,173) and Facebook News Consumers (N=1,429)  
Facebook News Survey Aug. 21-Sept. 2, 2013.

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## More Active Facebook Users Overall

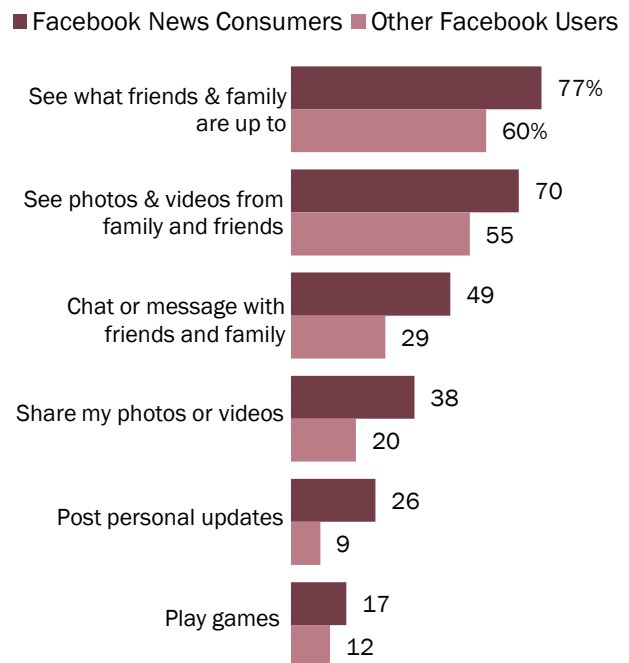
News does not seem to replace other activities on Facebook. Rather, news consumers visit the site for more reasons, spend more time on the platform, have been Facebook users for more years and have more Facebook friends than Facebook users who do not get news on the site.

When asked about several possible reasons people visit the site in the first place, Facebook news consumers are more likely to mention each as a major reason. For instance, while keeping up with friends and family is the biggest single driver to the site for both groups, 77% of Facebook news consumers say this is a “major reason” they use Facebook, compared with 60% of other Facebook users. This greater intensity holds true across most of the other reasons offered, including chatting with friends and family on the platform (49% vs. 29%), posting personal updates (26% vs. 9%), seeing photos and video from friends (70% vs. 55%) and sharing their own photos and videos (38% vs. 20%).

Facebook news consumers also spend more time on the site than other users do. About two-thirds (65%) of those who get news on Facebook say they visit the site several times a day, compared with only three out of 10 (29%) of other Facebook users. In addition, about six-in-ten Facebook news consumers (61%) say they check Facebook throughout the day or leave the site open, compared with a quarter (25%) of other Facebook users. And half (50%) of Facebook news consumers say they started using Facebook four or more years ago, compared with 33% of Facebook users who do not get news there. Facebook news consumers also, on average, have more Facebook friends than other users (241 versus 147).

## Facebook News Consumers Take Part in a Wide Mix of Other Facebook Activities

*Percent of Facebook Users Who Said Each Is a Major Reason*



Based on Facebook News Consumers N=1,429 and Other Facebook Users N=1,839  
Facebook News Survey Aug. 21-Sept. 2, 2013.

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## The Facebook News Experience

If a solid portion of the public now gets at least some news on Facebook, what *kind* of news do they get? How actively are people sharing or posting news stories? And how much do people connect directly with news organizations rather than get news stories via recommendations from friends and family?

Overall, Facebook news consumers see news about a wide variety of topics. Roughly half, 49%, regularly see stories about at least six different topic areas.

Entertainment news is most common. Almost three-quarters,

73%, of Facebook news consumers regularly see entertainment news.

Roughly two-thirds, 65%, of Facebook news consumers regularly see news about people and events in their own community. News about national government and politics is regularly seen by just over half, 55%, which is in line with news about sports (57%) and crime (51%).

Less frequently seen are stories about local government and politics (44%), local weather and traffic (42%), international issues (39%), science and technology (37%) and business (31%).

Facebook does not yet play much of a role in sharing and learning about breaking news. Just 28% of Facebook news consumers have ever used Facebook to keep up with a news event as it unfolds, and, of those, less than half (41%) say Facebook is one of the first places they turn to keep up with such an event.

### Facebook News Consumers See News about a Variety of Topics on the Site

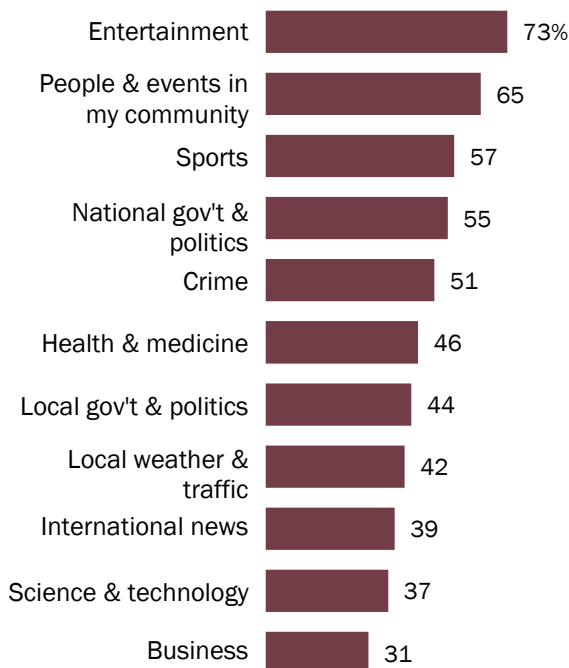
|                   | %  |
|-------------------|----|
| 2 or fewer topics | 18 |
| 3 to 5            | 33 |
| 6 to 8            | 32 |
| 9 to 11           | 17 |

Based on Facebook News Consumers  
N=1,429  
Facebook News Survey Aug. 21-Sept. 2,  
2013.

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### Kinds of News on Facebook

Percent of Facebook News Consumers who Regularly See News on Facebook about...



Based on Facebook News Consumers N=1,429  
Facebook News Survey Aug. 21-Sept. 2, 2013.

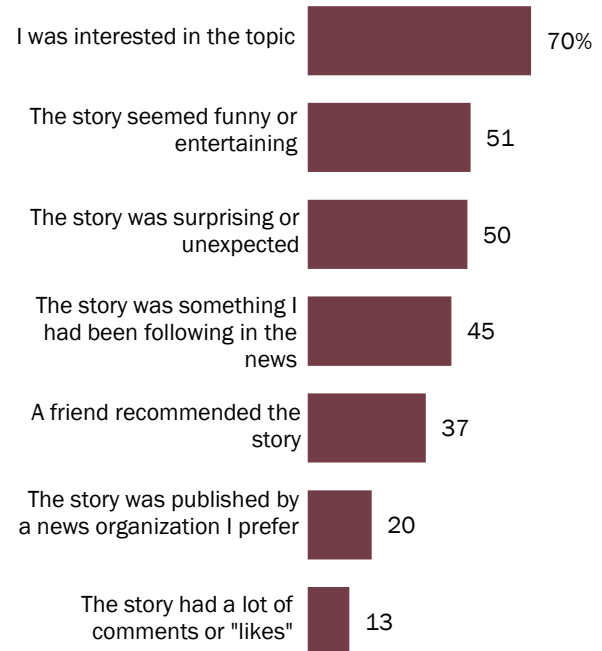
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The coveted “click back” from links inside Facebook posts to full stories on a news website is fairly common. Two-thirds of Facebook news consumers, 64%, say that they at least sometimes click on links to news stories. Still, just 16% do this often.

The biggest single reason named for clicking on links about news stories is interest in the topic. Seven-in-ten (70%) of those who ever click on news stories say this is a major reason they do so; 45% cite the fact that they are already following the story in the news. Other popular reasons for clicking on news stories are that the story seemed funny or entertaining (51%) or surprising (50%).

The source of the news post ranks low among the reasons people follow a link to the full story. Just over a third, 37%, say a friend’s recommendation is a major reason they click on news links, and only 20% say a major reason is because the post is from a news organization they prefer.

### Major Reasons Why People Click on Links to News Stories



Based on Facebook News Consumers who click on links N = 1,294  
Facebook News Survey Aug. 21-Sept. 2, 2013.

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## The Social Experience & Where News Organizations Fit In

Facebook is a site built upon social connections with friends and family and has developed a news experience that also has a strong social component.

A majority, 60%, “like” or comment on stories at least sometimes – with 19% that do so often. That is almost on par with clicking on links to the news stories themselves (64%).

Just under half, 43%, at least sometimes post or share (10% do so often). Though, just 23% post directly to a news organization’s or reporter’s Facebook page (6% often).

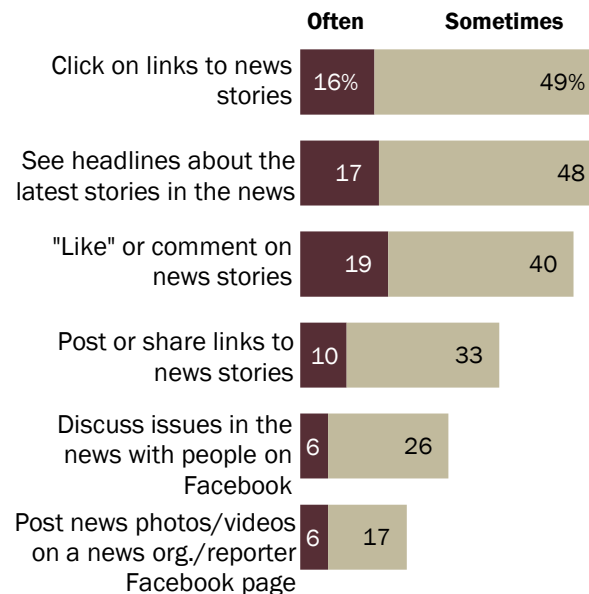
Back and forth discussion about issues in the news occurs at least sometimes for about a third (32%) of Facebook news consumers.

Another sign of the social nature is the degree to which friends and family drive the news activity. Just a third, 34%, of Facebook news consumers even include news organizations or individual journalists and commentators directly in their feed by “liking” or following them. That means, then, that two-thirds of people who get news on Facebook have it passed along to them second, third or twentieth hand from their Facebook friends – rather than directly from news organizations.

When news organizations or individual reporters are “liked” by Facebook users, they tend to play a strong role in their Facebook news diets. Roughly half of those who do follow news organizations or reporters, 48%, say most of the news they get on Facebook comes from these sources rather than friends and family.

### Ways that Facebook News Consumers Interact with News Posts

*Percent of Facebook News Consumers Who...*



Based on Facebook News Consumers N=1,429  
Facebook News Survey Aug. 21-Sept. 2, 2013.

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These Facebook news consumers who “like” news organizations or journalists also show higher levels of news engagement on this platform.

For instance, a majority, 54%, say Facebook is an important way for them to get news; that compares with 38% of Facebook news consumers who do not “like” or follow news organizations.

Those who “like” news organizations, reporters or commentators on Facebook are more likely than other news consumers on the platform to see headlines, click on links, comment, post stories and discuss issues in the news. They also are more enamored of the

Facebook news experience overall. The vast majority, 84%, enjoy seeing posts about news mixed in with other kinds of posts. That compares with 68% of others who get news on the platform but do not actively “like” news organizations, reporters or commentators.

Greater proportions of those who “like” or follow news organizations or individuals regularly see news about entertainment, people and events in their community, national government and politics, crime, local government and politics, health and medicine, local weather and traffic, international news, science and technology, and business. The only type of news that they are not significantly more likely to see regularly on Facebook is news about sports.

This group also is more than twice as likely as other Facebook news consumers to turn to the site for breaking news: 44% versus 20%. And of that 44%, roughly half say that Facebook is one of the first places they go to find out about a news event.

It does not seem to be the case, though, that Facebook news consumers who “like” or follow news organizations are discovering new news sources through Facebook as much as connecting with

### The Involved Facebook News Consumer

|   | Facebook news consumers who “like” news orgs<br>% | Facebook news consumers who don’t “like” news orgs<br>% |
|---|---|---|
| I follow news all/most of the time                              | 46  | 37  |
| I use Facebook to keep up with news events                      | 44  | 20  |
| News I get on Facebook is mostly news I only see there          | 28  | 23  |
| I enjoy seeing posts about news along with other posts          | 84  | 68  |
| Facebook is an important way I get news                         | 54  | 38  |
| <b>When on Facebook, I often...</b>                             |   |   |
| See headlines about the news                                    | 31  | 10  |
| “Like”/comment on news stories                                  | 29  | 15  |
| Click on links to news stories                                  | 27  | 10  |
| Post/share links to news stories                                | 16  | 7   |
| Discuss issues in the news with other people on Facebook        | 11  | 4   |
| Post photos/videos on a news org.’s or reporter’s Facebook page | 9   | 4   |
|   | N=507   | N=913   |

Facebook News Survey Aug. 21-Sept. 2, 2013.

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those they already turn to. About seven-in-ten (72%) say that the news they get on Facebook is news they tend to come across elsewhere. And the same percentage says that most of the sources they “like” or follow are ones they also read, watch or listen to outside of Facebook. One respondent explained, “I follow a local TV station, because they post breaking stories before they're on the air. It also helps with traffic problems due to wrecks or construction.”

## Facebook News “Sharers”

Another important subset of users is those who very actively engage with news on the site – the 12% who often post or share news stories (including posting their own content directly to a news organization’s or reporter’s Facebook page).

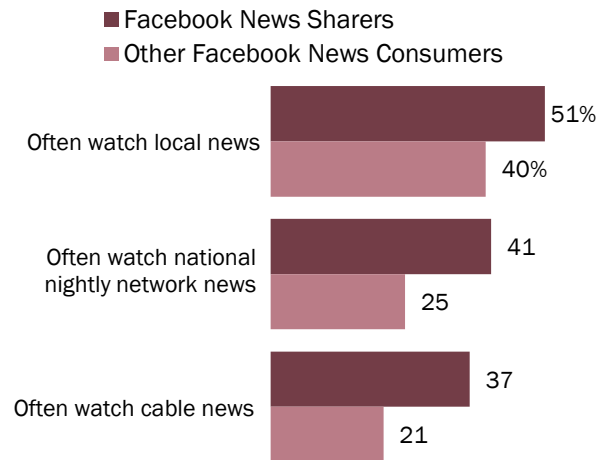
While there are some notable similarities between the behaviors of this engaged group and those who “like” or follow news organizations, only about half of this group, 52%, overlaps with the other, suggesting they are distinct populations.

Facebook news “sharers” get news across a wider array of platforms than other Facebook news consumers. In addition to heavy use of digital platforms for news, they are more likely than other Facebook news consumers to often get news on local, network and cable television. They are, however, no more likely than other Facebook news consumers to get news in print – either from newspapers or magazines.

These “sharers” rank Facebook as a more important part of their news experience. Nearly six-in-ten, 58%, say that Facebook is an important way they get news, and 40% say they think of Facebook as a useful way to get the news. In contrast, 41% of those who do not post or share news often indicate that Facebook is an important way to get news, and only 19% say it is a useful way to get news.

Additionally, about seven-in-ten (71%) check Facebook throughout the day, compared with 59% of other Facebook news consumers. And over half, 53%, spend more than an hour on the site each day, compared with 30% of others.

### Facebook News “Sharers” Still Get News Elsewhere



Facebook News Sharers (N=155)  
Other Facebook News Consumers (N=1,274)  
Facebook News Survey Aug. 21-Sept. 2, 2013.

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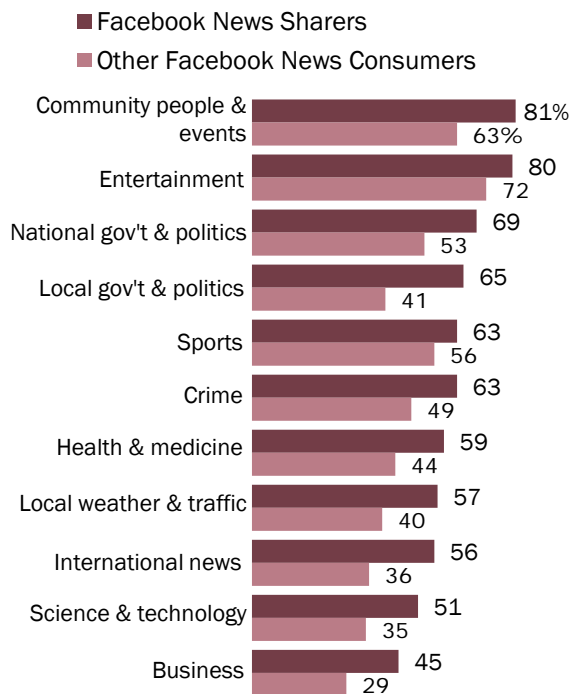
The data also suggest that, similar to those who “like” news organizations on Facebook, greater news engagement on the site coincides with a broader mix of news topics. The more engaged Facebook news consumers – those who “share” news – are more likely to learn about nearly every topic area asked about in the survey. About eight-in-ten of these news consumers (81%) get news about people and events in their own communities. National government and political news reaches 69%, and nearly as many (65%) get news about local government and politics. The more niche topics such as science and technology and business rank lower but still reach half or nearly half of these news “sharers” (51% and 45%, respectively).

Because of the nature of this group, a fair amount of the news they consume is passed along to others, so the breadth of topics may have a ripple effect on the Facebook news diets of others who use the site.

In addition to posting or sharing news stories, these users are overwhelmingly more engaged with other aspects of the Facebook news experience. They are nearly five times more likely to ever see headlines about the latest stories (55% versus 12% of other Facebook news consumers), seven times as likely to click on links to news stories on Facebook (64% to 9%), six times as likely to “like” or comment on news stories (73% versus 12%) and far more likely to discuss issues in the news with other people on Facebook (39% to 2%). And, more than half, 56%, of those who often post or share news have used Facebook to keep up with a news event as it was happening, roughly twice that of other Facebook news consumers (25%).

The most common reason why members of this group post news links is to pass along information they think is important for people to know. A vast majority, 89%, indicates that this is a major reason why they post or share news. The next most common reason is to create a discussion

### Kinds of News Facebook News “Sharers” Get



Facebook News Sharers (N=155)  
 Other Facebook News Consumers (N=1,274)  
 Note: All are significantly different between Facebook News Sharers and Other Facebook News Consumers, except for entertainment and sports.  
 Facebook News Survey Aug. 21-Sept. 2, 2013.

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among friends around an issue or event (70%), closely followed by the desire to make a statement (67%).

One respondent described his or her motivations for posting stories: “The items I re-post are because they are something I feel strongly about. It doesn't matter to me if no one else ever comments or “Likes” or agrees with it. I have placed it there so I can go back and find it again later. It's my Facebook and I reserve the right to post what I want.”

## The Mobile Facebook News Consumer

One major area of worldwide growth in the last year has been in the mobile market – both in terms of technology development and consumer behavior. Facebook itself now derives roughly 30% of its ad revenue from mobile.

More broadly, mobile ownership in the U.S. has grown rapidly. According to a 2013 [Pew Research Center study](#), a vast majority of American adults, 91%, own a cellphone, over half (56%) have a smartphone and a third (34%) own a tablet computer. But, desktops and laptops still have broader reach and remain the [primary mode of digital news consumption](#).

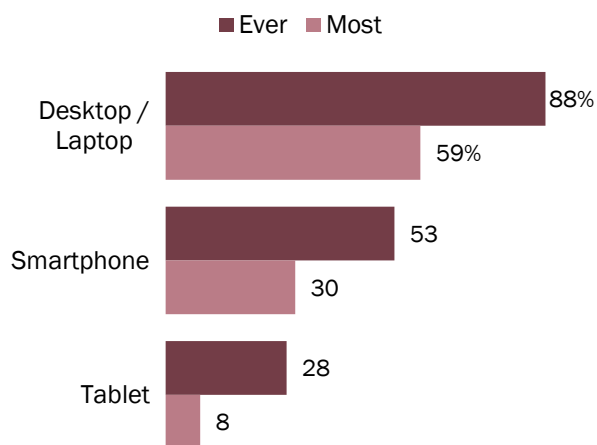
This is also the case for Facebook usage among U.S. adults, the survey reveals – though mobile news consumers tend to check in more frequently throughout the day.

Overall, 88% of Facebook users say they ever access the platform on a desktop or laptop computer, while 53% access it on a smartphone and 28% access it on a tablet (61% access it on at least one mobile device). And when asked what platform they access it *most* on, the desktop/laptop again ranks first at 59% of all users, compared with 30% who mostly access Facebook through a smartphone and 8% who mostly access the site via tablet.

Among Facebook news consumers, the split is narrower, though desktop/laptop is still the primary device: 53% desktop/laptop versus 46% mobile.

### How People Access Facebook

Percent of Facebook Users



Based on Facebook Users N=3,268  
Facebook News Survey Aug. 21-Sept. 2, 2013.

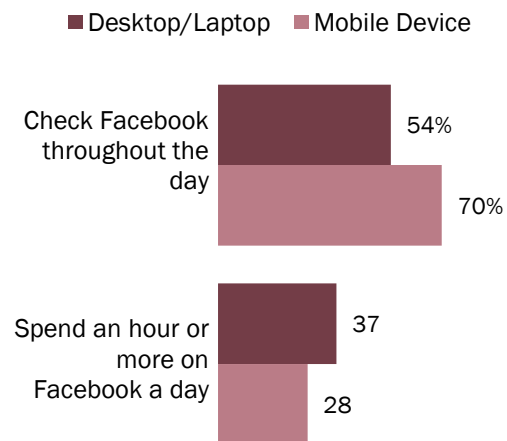
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Female Facebook news consumers are more likely than male consumers to primarily access the site through a mobile device (49% vs. 42%), as are younger Facebook news consumers compared with older consumers. Over half of Facebook news consumers who are 18-29 years old (56%) and 30-49 years old (53%) mostly access the site through a mobile device, compared with only about a quarter (24%) of Facebook news consumers who are 50 years of age or older.

When it comes to time on Facebook, the findings are split between desktop/laptop users and mobile users. Facebook news consumers who primarily access the site on a mobile device visit Facebook more frequently than their desktop/laptop counterparts. Seven-in-ten, 70%, mainly mobile users check in on Facebook several times a day versus 54% of mainly desktop/laptop users. But, desktop/laptop users tend to clock more total time on the site: 37% of mainly desktop/laptop users spend more than an hour each day on Facebook, compared with only 28% of mobile news consumers. Each of which may have different implications for the amount of news they encounter.<sup>1</sup>

## Time Spent on Facebook Differs by Device

Percent of Facebook News Consumers



Facebook News Consumers Who Mostly Use a Desktop/Laptop N=828 and Facebook News Consumers Who Mostly Use a Mobile Device N=498  
Facebook News Survey Aug. 21-Sept. 2, 2013.

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<sup>1</sup> May 2013 data from [comScore found](#) that mobile minutes surpassed desktop minutes among people in the U.S. who access Facebook through both means. But that data did not take into account people who access Facebook only through a desktop or laptop computer.

## Partisanship as a Part of the Facebook News Experience

One question that comes with the development of news as more of a social experience is the degree to which people are more likely to get news that conforms to their views. The data here offer some first insights but also suggest there is room for more research.

Facebook news consumers are on par with U.S. adults overall in saying they prefer news that does not have a point of view over news that shares their own view. More than two-thirds, 68%, of Facebook news consumers say they prefer news that does not have a point of view, nearly identical to the 71% of the general population that says this.

Still, Facebook news consumers who find the site an important way to get news show a greater predilection to getting news they agree with. This group is more likely than those who say it is not important to prefer news with their point of view (38% of those who say it is important versus 26% of those who say it is not).

Those with a political party affiliation also are more likely to say they prefer news that shares their own point of view. Among U.S. adults overall, about a third of Republicans (33%) and Democrats (30%) like news this way, compared with 19% of independents. That pattern also is true among Facebook news consumers; among this group, 36% of Republicans, 34% of Democrats and just 24% of independents say they like news that mostly shares their own point of view.

As mentioned earlier, political statements are some of the more bothersome kinds of posts to Facebook users. Some go the extra mile to respect those who may disagree with their take on a political issue: “With politically charged national news, some issues I feel very strongly about are antithetical to many of my relatives’ opinions,” offers one respondent. “If I post on those topics, I manage my privacy settings to keep those posts off the pages of my disagreeable contacts.”

Still, more than half of Facebook news consumers, 58%, have been surprised by a friend’s or family member’s views – suggesting that at least to some degree Facebook has helped people get to know where their friends stand on different issues.

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### People Who Prefer News that Shares Their Point of View

|   | %  |
|---|----|
| General population                        | 27 |
| Facebook users                            | 28 |
| Facebook news consumers                   | 31 |
| People who “like” news orgs               | 37 |
| <b>U.S. adults who are...</b>             |    |
| Republican                                | 33 |
| Democrat                                  | 30 |
| Independent                               | 19 |
| <b>Facebook news consumers who are...</b> |    |
| Republican                                | 36 |
| Democrat                                  | 34 |
| Independent                               | 24 |

Facebook News Survey Aug. 21-Sept. 2, 2013.

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## Methodology

A number of people contributed to this report. Amy Mitchell, director of journalism research, oversaw the research project and served as lead author of the report. Senior Researcher Jocelyn Kiley led the development of the survey instrument and methodological strategy. Kiley, Research Associate Jeffrey Gottfried and Research Analyst Emily Guskin managed the data and analysis.

The report was written by Mitchell, Gottfried, Guskin and Senior Researcher Jesse Holcomb. Research Analyst Katerina Matsa developed the charts and graphs. The report was number checked by Gottfried, Guskin, Kiley and Matsa and copy edited by Communications Associate Molly Rohal.

Director of Survey Research Scott Keeter provided research and editorial guidance. Communications Manager Dana Page handled outreach for the project and Google Journalism Fellow Jan Boyles provided assistance in the development of the questionnaire. Research Assistant Seth Motel assisted with data management. Jessica Schillinger created graphics for the report.

The analysis in this report is based on a survey conducted Aug. 21-Sept. 2, 2013, among a sample of 5,173 adults 18 years of age or older. The survey was conducted by GfK among a random sample of households in their nationally representative online research panel, KnowledgePanel. GfK panel members are recruited through probability sampling methods and include both those with internet access and those without (GfK provides internet access for those who do not have it and, if needed, a device to access the internet when they join the panel). A combination of random digit dialing (RDD) and address-based sampling (ABS) methodologies have been used to recruit panel members (in 2009 GfK switched their sampling methodology for recruiting panel members from RDD to ABS). The panel includes households with landlines and cellphones, including those only with cellphones, and those without a phone. Both the RDD and ABS samples were provided by Marketing Systems Groups (MSG). GfK continually recruits new panel members throughout the year to offset panel attrition as people leave the panel. The survey was conducted in English.

Respondents were selected randomly from eligible adult household members of the panel. Of the 5,173 adults in the full sample who completed the survey, 64% were identified as Facebook users, and 30% were identified as Facebook news consumers. All sampled members received an initial email to notify them of the survey and provide a link to the survey questionnaire. Additional follow-up reminders were sent as needed to those who had not yet responded.

The final sample of 5,173 adults was weighted using an iterative technique that matches gender, age, race/ethnicity, education, region, household income, home ownership status and

metropolitan area to parameters from the July 2013 Census Bureau's Current Population Survey (CPS). In addition, the sample is weighted to match current patterns of internet access from the July 2011 CPS survey. This weight is multiplied by an initial sampling or base weight that corrects for differences in the probability of selection of various segments of GfK's sample and by a panel weight that adjusts for any biases due to nonresponse and noncoverage at the panel recruitment stage (using all of the parameters described above). Details about the GfK panel-level weights can be found at:

[http://marketing.gfkamerica.com/knowledgenetworks/knpanel/docs/KnowledgePanel\(R\)-Design-Summary-Description.pdf](http://marketing.gfkamerica.com/knowledgenetworks/knpanel/docs/KnowledgePanel(R)-Design-Summary-Description.pdf)

Sampling errors and statistical tests of significance take into account the effect of weighting at each of these stages. The margin of sampling error at the 95% confidence level is plus or minus 1.7 percentage points for results based on the full sample (n=5,173). The margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2.2 percentage points for Facebook users (n=3,268) and plus or minus 3.3 percentage points for Facebook news consumers (n=1,429). 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.

## Appendix

### What Do Facebook News Consumers Look Like?

|                                 | Facebook<br>News<br>Consumers | Facebook<br>"Likers" | Facebook<br>"Sharers" |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
|                                 | %                             | %                    | %                     |
| Republican                      | 26                            | 26                   | 16                    |
| Democrat                        | 38                            | 39                   | 52                    |
| Independent                     | 30                            | 28                   | 26                    |
| Male                            | 42                            | 42                   | 39                    |
| Female                          | 58                            | 58                   | 61                    |
| > \$30,000                      | 22                            | 23                   | 32                    |
| \$30,000-\$74,999               | 37                            | 36                   | 34                    |
| \$75,000<                       | 41                            | 41                   | 34                    |
| 18-29                           | 34                            | 34                   | 37                    |
| 30-49                           | 39                            | 43                   | 43                    |
| 50-64                           | 20                            | 20                   | 18                    |
| 65+                             | 7                             | 4                    | 3                     |
| High school graduate<br>or less | 39                            | 36                   | 41                    |
| Some college                    | 31                            | 35                   | 41                    |
| Bachelor's or more              | 30                            | 29                   | 18                    |
| White, Non-Hispanic             | 63                            | 63                   | 51                    |
| Non-white                       | 37                            | 37                   | 49                    |
|                                 | N=1,429                       | N=507                | N=155                 |

Facebook News Survey Aug. 21-Sept. 2, 2013.

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## Different Ages See Some Different News on Facebook

|  | All Facebook<br>news<br>consumers | 18-29 | 30-49 | 50+   |
|--|-----------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
|  | %                                 | %     | %     | %     |
| Entertainment                              | 73                                | 78    | 69    | 73    |
| People and events in your<br>own community | 65                                | 66    | 63    | 67    |
| Sports                                     | 57                                | 66    | 56    | 46    |
| National government &<br>politics          | 55                                | 57    | 51    | 59    |
| Crime                                      | 51                                | 55    | 47    | 50    |
| Health and medicine                        | 46                                | 36    | 49    | 53    |
| Local government & politics                | 44                                | 45    | 44    | 44    |
| Local weather and traffic                  | 42                                | 44    | 41    | 41    |
| International news                         | 39                                | 42    | 37    | 37    |
| Science and technology                     | 37                                | 37    | 37    | 36    |
| Business                                   | 31                                | 33    | 29    | 30    |
|  | N=1,429                           | N=327 | N=536 | N=566 |

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