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News Use Across Social Media Platforms in 2020

Facebook stands out as a regular source of news for about a third of Americans

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How we did this

To better understand the ways Americans get their news in the digital age, we surveyed 9,220 U.S. adults from Aug. 31 to Sept. 7, 2020. Everyone who took part is a member of Pew Research Center’s American Trends Panel (ATP), an online survey panel that is recruited through national, random sampling of residential addresses. This way nearly all U.S. adults have a chance of selection. The survey is weighted to be representative of the U.S. adult population by gender, race, ethnicity, partisan affiliation, education and other categories. Read more about [the ATP’s methodology](#).

Here are [the questions used for this analysis](#), along with responses, and [its methodology](#).

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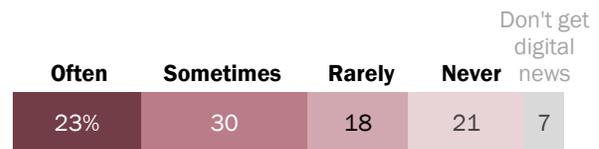
News Use Across Social Media Platforms in 2020

Facebook stands out as a regular source of news for about a third of Americans

As social media companies struggle to deal with misleading information on their platforms about [the election](#), [the COVID-19 pandemic](#) and more, a large portion of Americans continue to rely on these sites for news. About half of U.S. adults (53%) say they [get news from social media](#) “often” or “sometimes,” and this use is spread out across a number of different sites, according to a Pew Research Center survey conducted Aug. 31-Sept. 7, 2020.

About half of Americans get news on social media at least sometimes

% of U.S. adults who get news from social media ...



Note: This chart is not comparable to similar questions asked in the past due to question wording changes; see Appendix for more details.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 31-Sept. 7, 2020. “News Use Across Social Media Platforms in 2020”

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Changing the way we measure news consumption on social media

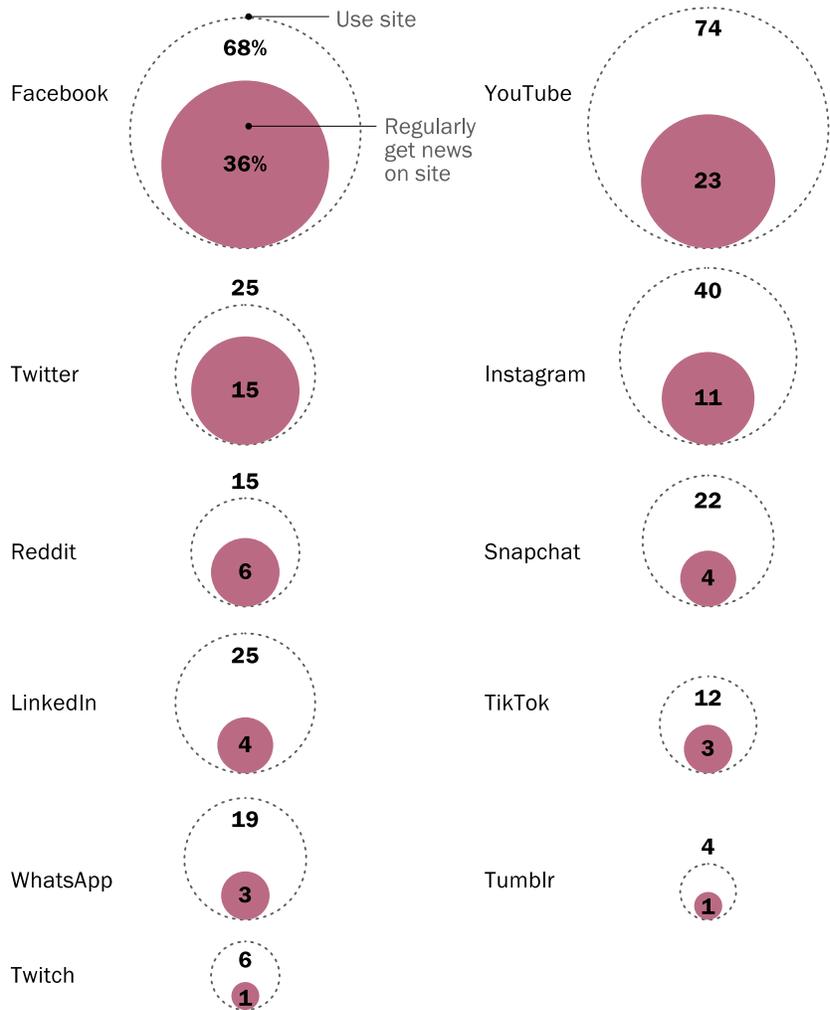
Past research by Pew Research Center has tracked the portion of Americans who use [social media sites for news](#). This survey asks about similar topics in a different way ([see more details here](#)) because of this, some of these measures cannot be directly compared with past findings. These changes in question wording reflect the Center’s efforts to [improve the way we measure news consumption](#).

Among 11 social media sites asked about as a regular source of news, Facebook sits at the top, with about a third (36%) of Americans getting news there regularly. YouTube comes next, with 23% of U.S. adults regularly getting news there. Twitter serves as a regular news source for 15% of U.S. adults.

Other social media sites are less likely to be regular news sources. About one-in-ten Americans or fewer report regularly getting news on Instagram (11%), Reddit (6%), Snapchat (4%), LinkedIn (4%), TikTok (3%), WhatsApp (3%), Tumblr (1%) and Twitch (1%).

Facebook stands out as regular source of news for Americans

% of U.S. adults who ...



Note: This chart is not comparable to similar questions asked in the past due to question wording changes; see Appendix for more details.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 31-Sept. 7, 2020.

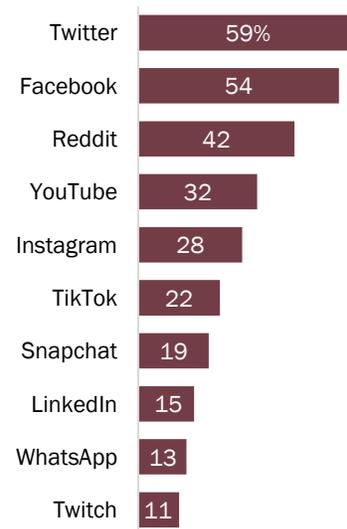
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These lower percentages for news use are in some cases related to the fact that fewer Americans report using them at all, compared with the shares who use Facebook and YouTube. If we consider news users as a portion of a site’s overall user base, some sites stand out as being more “newsy” even if their total audience is relatively small. Twitter, for example, is used by 25% of U.S. adults, but over half of those users get news on the site regularly. And 42% of Reddit users get news regularly on the site, though it overall has a very small user base (15% of U.S. adults say they use Reddit). On the other hand, YouTube, though widely used, sees a smaller portion of its users turning to the site for news regularly (32%).

Large portion of Twitter users regularly get news on the site

*% of each social media site’s users who **regularly** get news there*



Note: Tumblr not shown due to insufficient sample size.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 31-Sept. 7, 2020.

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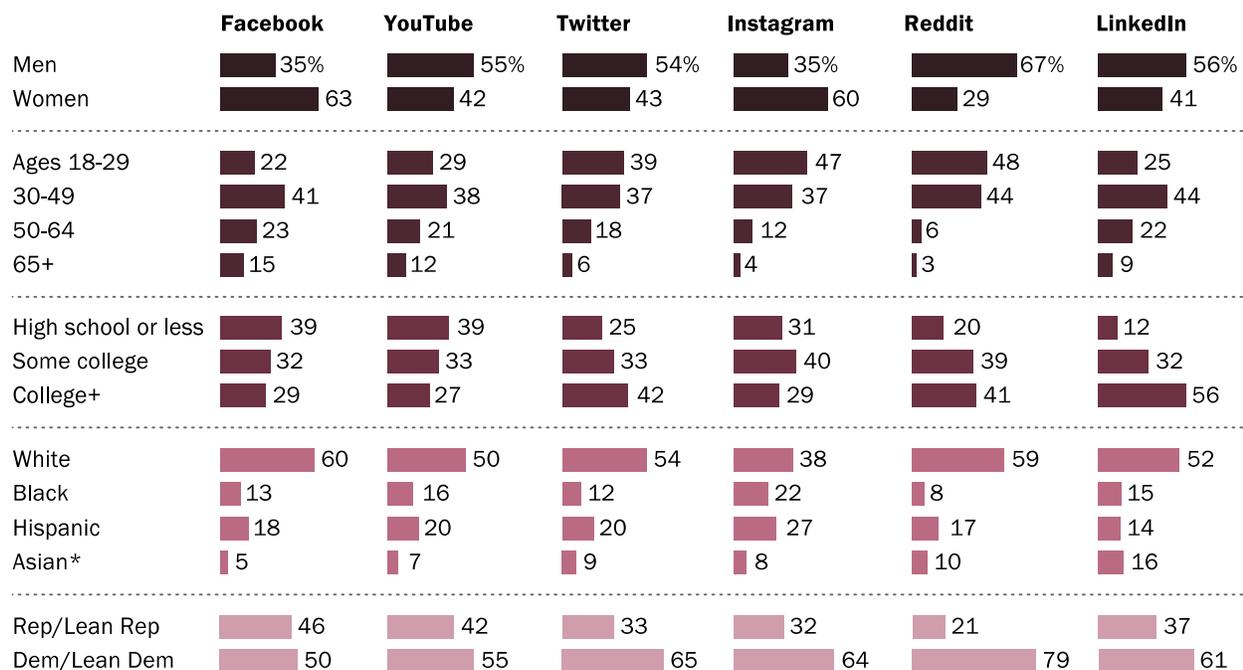
Demographics of regular social media news consumers

There are in some cases drastic demographic differences between the people who turn to each social media site for news. For example, White adults make up a majority of the regular news users of Facebook and Reddit but fewer than half of those who turn to Instagram for news. Both Black and Hispanic adults make up about a quarter of Instagram's regular news users (22% and 27%, respectively). People who regularly get news on Facebook are more likely to be women than men (63% vs. 35%), while two-thirds of Reddit's regular news users are men.

The majority of regular news users of many sites – YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Reddit and LinkedIn – are Democrats or lean Democratic. This may be related to [the relatively young age profile](#) of the news user base of these social media sites. No social media site included here has regular news users who are more likely to be Republican or lean Republican.

Demographic profiles and party of regular social media news users in the U.S.

% of each social media site's regular news consumers who are ...



*Asian adults were interviewed in English only.

Note: Tumblr, WhatsApp, TikTok, Twitch and Snapchat not shown. White, Black and Asian adults include those who report being only one race and are not Hispanic; Hispanics are of any race.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 31-Sept. 7, 2020.

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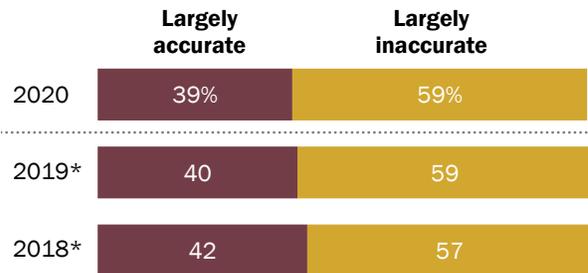
News on social media sites still seen as inaccurate, as about three-in-ten say it helps them understand current events

A majority of the Americans who are getting news on social media continue to question its accuracy. About six-in-ten (59%) of those who at least rarely get news on social media say they expect that news to be largely inaccurate, while 39% expect it to be largely accurate. And though there has been increasing discussion of the information on social media, including [congressional hearings in 2019](#) and [in 2020](#), this is not a new sentiment among social media news users: Similar portions have said they expected the news to be inaccurate [since 2018](#).

Most Americans do not say news on social media has helped them better understand current events. The largest segment, 47%, says it doesn't make much of a difference, while 29% say that it has helped their understanding and 23% say it has actually left them more confused. This largely reflects responses to similar questions in 2018 and 2019, when a minority said that social media news helped them better understand current events.

As in past years, most social media news consumers expect news there to be inaccurate

% of social media news consumers who say they expect the news they see on social media to be ...

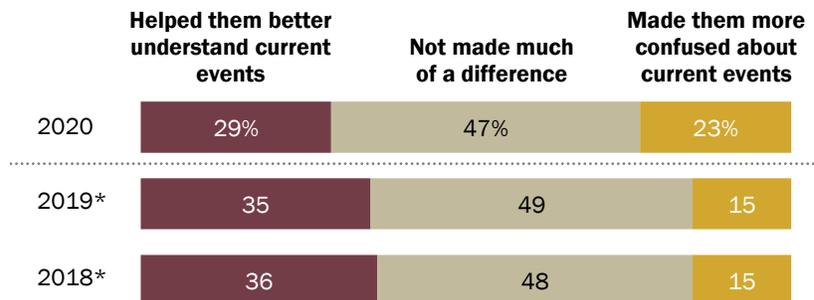


*July 2019 and August 2018 questions were filtered on a different measurement of social media news use. See the topline for details. Note: Respondents who did not give an answer not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 31-Sept. 7, 2020. "News Use Across Social Media Platforms in 2020"

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A minority say news on social media has improved their understanding of current events

% of social media news consumers who say that news on social media has ...



*July 2019 and August 2018 questions were filtered on a different measurement of social media news use. See the topline for details.

Note: Respondents who did not give an answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 31-Sept. 7, 2020.

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Appendix: Changing measurements of news consumption on social media

This year's edition of Pew Research Center's annual study of how Americans use social media sites for news asks about similar topics in different ways from previous years. The Center's experts made changes this year to [improve measurements of news consumption](#) on social media. Those changes are described below. Accordingly, these measures should not be directly compared with similar data from earlier years.

For the measure of how often respondents get news from social media:

- In 2019, all respondents were asked how often they get news from social media. In 2020, respondents were first asked how often they get news from “a smartphone, computer or tablet,” and only those who said they did so “often,” “sometimes” or “rarely” were asked how often they get news from social media.
- In 2019, respondents were asked how often they get news from “a social media site (such as Facebook, Twitter, or Snapchat).” In 2020, respondents were asked how often they get news from “social media such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram.”
- In 2019, the response options were, in order shown, “often,” “sometimes,” “hardly ever” and “never.” In 2020, the response options were, in order shown, “never,” “rarely,” “sometimes” and “often.”

For the measure of how many U.S. adults get news regularly from individual social media sites:

- In 2019, social media users were asked: “Do you ever get news or news headlines on any of the following sites?” In 2020, social media users were asked: “Do you REGULARLY get news or news headlines on any of the following social media sites or apps?”

You can see these questions in the topline for this report [here](#), and you can see previously asked questions [here](#).

Learn more in our recent methodological report examining [best practices for measuring news consumption in a digital era](#).

Acknowledgments

Pew Research Center is a subsidiary of The Pew Charitable Trusts, its primary funder. This is the latest report in Pew Research Center's ongoing investigation of the state of news, information and journalism in the digital age, a research program funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, with generous support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals. Find related reports online at journalism.org.

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Methodology

The American Trends Panel survey methodology

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. Panelists participate via self-administered web surveys. Panelists who do not have internet access at home are provided with a tablet and wireless internet connection. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish. The panel is being managed by Ipsos.

Data in this report is drawn from the panel wave conducted Aug. 31 to Sept. 7, 2020. A total of 9,220 panelists responded out of 9,810 who were sampled, for a response rate of 94%.

This does not include two panelists who were removed from the data due to extremely high rates of refusal or straightlining. The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 5%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged on to the survey and completed at least one item is 1%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 9,220 respondents is plus or minus 1.7 percentage points.

American Trends Panel recruitment surveys

Recruitment dates	Mode	Invited	Joined	Active panelists remaining
Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014	Landline/ cell RDD	9,809	5,338	2,302
Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015	Landline/ cell RDD	6,004	2,976	1,334
April 25 to June 4, 2017	Landline/ cell RDD	3,905	1,628	683
Aug. 8 to Oct. 31, 2018	ABS/web	9,396	8,778	6,398
Aug. 19 to Nov. 30, 2019	ABS/web	5,900	4,720	3,023
June 1 to July 19, 2020	ABS/web	1,865	1,636	1,633
	Total	36,879	25,076	15,373

Note: Approximately once per year, panelists who have not participated in multiple consecutive waves or who did not complete an annual profiling survey are removed from the panel. Panelists also become inactive if they ask to be removed from the panel.

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The subsample from the ATP consisted of 9,810 ATP members that responded to the Wave 57 survey, the annual profile survey and were still active. Panelists who had not yet completed the annual profile survey were ineligible.

The ATP was created in 2014, with the first cohort of panelists invited to join the panel at the end of a large, national, landline and cellphone random-digit-dial survey that was conducted in both English and Spanish. Two additional recruitments were conducted using the same method in 2015 and 2017, respectively. Across these three surveys, a total of 19,718 adults were invited to join the ATP, of which 9,942 agreed to participate.

In August 2018, the ATP switched from telephone to address-based recruitment. Invitations were sent to a random, address-based sample (ABS) of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File. In each household, the adult with the next birthday was asked to go online to complete a survey, at the end of which they were invited to join the panel. For a random half-sample of invitations, households without internet access were instructed to return a postcard. These households were contacted by telephone and sent a tablet if they agreed to participate. A total of 9,396 were invited to join the panel, and 8,778 agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. The same recruitment procedure was carried out on August 19, 2019, from which a total of 5,900 were invited to join the panel and 4,720 agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. Another recruitment using the same procedure was carried out on June 1, 2020, from which a total of 1,865 were invited to join the panel and 1,636 agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. Of the 25,076 individuals who have ever joined the ATP, 15,373 remained active panelists and continued to receive survey invitations at the time this survey was conducted.

The U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File has been estimated to cover as much as 98% of the population, although some studies suggest that the coverage could be in the low 90% range.¹ The American Trends Panel never uses breakout routers or chains that direct respondents to additional surveys.

¹ AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. "[AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling.](#)"

Weighting

The ATP data was weighted in a multistep process that accounts for multiple stages of sampling and nonresponse that occur at different points in the survey process. First, each panelist begins with a base weight that reflects their probability of selection for their initial recruitment survey (and the probability of being invited to participate in the panel in cases where only a subsample of respondents were invited). The base weights for panelists recruited in different years are scaled to be proportionate to the effective sample size for all active panelists in their cohort. To correct for nonresponse to the initial recruitment surveys and gradual panel attrition, the base weights for all active panelists are calibrated to align with the population benchmarks identified in the accompanying table to create a full-panel weight.

For ATP waves in which only a subsample of panelists are invited to participate, a wave-specific base weight is created by adjusting the full-panel weights for subsampled panelists to account for any differential probabilities of selection for the particular panel wave. For waves in which all active panelists are invited to participate, the wave-specific base weight is identical to the full-panel weight.

In the final weighting step, the wave-specific base weights for panelists who completed the survey are again calibrated to match the population benchmarks specified above. These weights are trimmed (typically at about the 1st and 99th percentiles) to reduce the loss in precision stemming from variance in the weights. Sampling errors and test of statistical significance take into account the effect of weighting.

Weighting dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Age x Gender	2018 American Community Survey
Education x Gender	
Education x Age	
Race/Ethnicity x Education	
Born inside vs. outside the U.S. among Hispanics and Asian Americans	
Years lived in the U.S.	
Census region x Metro/Non-metro	2019 CPS March Supplement
Volunteerism	2017 CPS Volunteering & Civic Life Supplement
Voter registration	2018 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Party affiliation	Average of the three most recent Pew Research Center telephone surveys
Frequency of internet use	ATP 2020 ABS recruitment survey

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on non-institutionalized adults. Voter registration is calculated using procedures from Hur, Achen (2013) and rescaled to include the total US adult population. The ATP 2020 ABS recruitment survey featured 1,862 online completions and 2,247 mail survey completions.

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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	9,220	1.7 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.

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**2020 PEW RESEARCH CENTER'S AMERICAN TRENDS PANEL
WAVE 73 PATHWAYS/SOCIAL MEDIA SURVEY
FINAL TOPLINE
August 31-September 7, 2020
N=9,220**

ASK ALL:NEWSPLAT How often do you get news from... **[RANDOMIZE]**

	<u>Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Never</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a. Television Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	40	28	20	11	*
b. Radio Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	16	34	28	21	*
c. Print publications Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	10	22	39	29	*

DISPLAY IF INTERNET USER**(XTABLET=2) [N=9,080]****BASED ON TOTAL:**

d. A smartphone, computer or tablet Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	60	26	7	7	*
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ASK IF GETS NEWS FROM DIGITAL DEVICES AT LEAST RARELY (NEWSPLAT_d=2-4) [N=8,846]:NEWSPLAT_DIG Now thinking about the news you get on a smartphone, computer, or tablet, how often do you get news from... **[RANDOMIZE]****BASED ON TOTAL:**

	<u>Often</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Rarely</u>	<u>Never</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a. News websites or apps Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	34	35	16	15	*
b. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	23	30	18	29	*
c. Search through Google or other search engines Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	23	41	20	15	*
d. Podcasts Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	6	16	24	53	*

ASK IF GETS NEWS FROM MORE THAN ONE PLATFORM (AT LEAST TWO OF NEWSPLAT_a-c=2-4 AND NEWSPLAT_DIG_a-d=2-4) [N=9,135]:

PLATFORM_PREFER Which do you prefer for getting news? [RANDOMIZE IN SAME ORDER AS FOR NEWSPLAT AND NEWSPLAT_DIG; SHOW ONLY THOSE USED AT LEAST RARELY IN NEWSPLAT_a-c=2-4 OR NEWSPLAT_DIG_a-d=2-4; AUTOPUNCH IF ONLY USES ONE SOURCE]

BASED ON TOTAL:

Aug 31-Sep 7

2020

35	Television
7	Radio
5	Print publications
26	News websites or apps
11	Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram
12	Search through Google or other search engines
3	Podcasts
1	No answer
1	Did not get news on any platform

ASK ALL WITH INTERNET ACCESS (XTABLET=2) [N=9,080]:

WEB1 Do you use any of the following social media sites? [RANDOMIZE]

BASED ON TOTAL

	<u>Yes, use this</u>	<u>No, do not use this²</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a. Twitter			
Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	25	74	1
Jan 6-Jan 21, 2020	22	76	2
July 8-July 21, 2019	23	76	1
Jan 22-Feb 5, 2019	23	75	2
b. Instagram			
Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	40	59	1
Jan 6-Jan 21, 2020	37	62	1
July 8-July 21, 2019	38	61	1
Jan 22-Feb 5, 2019	37	62	1
c. Facebook			
Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	68	32	1
Jan 6-Jan 21, 2020	67	32	1
July 8-July 21, 2019	71	29	*
Jan 22-Feb 5, 2019	72	28	1
c. Snapchat			
Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	22	77	1
July 8-July 21, 2019	23	76	1
Jan 22-Feb 5, 2019	24	75	2
e. YouTube			
Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	74	26	1
Jan 6-Jan 21, 2020	71	28	1
July 8-July 21, 2019	74	25	*
Jan 22-Feb 5, 2019	81	19	1

² In Jan 22-Feb 5, 2019, the 3% of respondents who do not have internet access at home were asked this question and their responses were included. In later surveys, the respondents who do not have internet access at home were excluded from the question; they are included here with those who said "Never."

WEB1 CONTINUED ...		<u>Yes, use this</u>	<u>No, do not use this</u>	<u>No answer</u>
f.	LinkedIn			
	Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	25	74	1
	July 8-July 21, 2019	27	72	1
g.	Reddit			
	Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	15	83	1
	July 8-July 21, 2019	13	86	1
h.	Tumblr			
	Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	4	95	1
	July 8-July 21, 2019	4	94	1
i.	WhatsApp			
	Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	19	80	1
	July 8-July 21, 2019	18	81	1
j.	TikTok			
	Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	12	87	1
	July 8-July 21, 2019	3	95	2
k.	Twitch			
	Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	6	92	1
	July 8-July 21, 2019	5	93	1

ASK IF USES ANY SOCIAL MEDIAL SITES:

SOCIALNEWS Do you REGULARLY get news or news headlines on any of the following social media sites or apps? By news we mean information about events and issues that involve more than just your friends or family. **[ONLY SHOW ITEMS USED IN WEB1 (WEB1a-k=1); RANDOMIZE IN SAME ORDER AS WEB1]**

BASED ON TOTAL		<u>Yes, regularly get news on this</u>	<u>No, don't regularly get news on this</u>	<u>No answer</u>
a.	Twitter			
	Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	15	85	*
b.	Instagram			
	Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	11	88	*
c.	Facebook			
	Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	36	63	*
d.	Snapchat			
	Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	4	96	*
e.	YouTube			
	Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	23	76	*
f.	LinkedIn			
	Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	4	96	*
g.	Reddit			
	Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	6	94	*
h.	Tumblr			
	Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	1	99	0

SOCIALNEWS CONTINUED ...

	Yes, regularly get <u>news on this</u>	No, don't regularly get <u>news on this</u>	No <u>answer</u>
i. WhatsApp Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	3	97	*
j. TikTok Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	3	97	*
k. Twitch Aug 31-Sep 7, 2020	1	99	*

ASK SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS CONSUMER (NEWSPLAT_DIG_b=2,3,4) [N=6,396]:

SNSSKIP Which of the following best describes how you approach news stories from social media sites, even if neither is exactly right? **[RANDOMIZE]**

I expect the news I see on social media will...

Aug 31-Sep 7 <u>2020</u>		TREND FOR COMPARISON:³	
		July 8–July 21 <u>2019</u>	July 30-Aug 12 <u>2018</u>
39	Largely be accurate	40	42
59	Largely be inaccurate	59	57
1	No answer	1	1

ASK SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS CONSUMER (NEWSPLAT_DIG_b=2,3,4) [N=6,396]:

SNSINFORM Overall, would you say news on social media has... **[RANDOMIZE FIRST TWO RESPONSES]**

Aug 31-Sep 7 <u>2020</u>		TREND FOR COMPARISON:¹	
		Jul 8–July 21 <u>2019</u>	Jul 30-Aug 12 <u>2018</u>
29	Helped you better understand current events	35	36
23	Made you more confused about current events	15	15
47	Not made much of a difference	49	48
1	No answer	*	1

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS PREVIOUSLY RELEASED

³ July 2019 and August 2018 questions were filtered on a different measurement of social media news use. Respondents had to "get news from a social media site (such as Facebook, Twitter, or Snapchat)" either "often," "sometimes" or "hardly ever."