



How Millennials Get News: Inside the Habits of America's First Digital Generation

March 2015

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. OVERVIEW.....	1
About the Study.....	4
II. MILLENNIALS ARE HARDLY NEWSLESS, UNINTERESTED, OR DISENGAGED FROM NEWS AND THE WORLD AROUND THEM.....	4
News is a big part of Millennials' online activity.....	5
Millennials have a mix of motivations – civic, social, and practical – for keeping up with news.....	7
News as part of the connected life.....	9
III. MILLENNIALS' NUANCED PATHS TO NEWS AND INFORMATION.....	9
Millennials follow many topics, including information about entertainment, news, and their daily lives.....	10
The powerful role of social media, especially Facebook, in the news and information lives of young adults.....	12
Millennials get news and information from a variety of places and where they go is topic driven.....	14
However they first discovered it, when Millennials want to learn more, they most often turn to search.....	17
IV. DIGITAL LIVES OF MILLENNIALS	20
A majority of Millennials feel connected most of the time, but not always enthusiastically	20
Many Millennials pay for subscriptions, but more often it is for entertainment than information and news	21
Those who worry about privacy are mostly worried about identity theft.....	23
V. HOW MILLENNIALS USE AND CONTROL SOCIAL MEDIA.....	25
Millennials use a variety of social networks for news and information, especially Facebook.....	25
While social networks may be a place that people bump into news, many Millennials engage more actively with the news once there.....	26
Millennials say social media exposes them to different opinions and views	28
Millennials report changing their social media behavior over time	30
VI. DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION.....	31
Even within the Millennial generation there are differences by age.....	31
Men and women have different online privacy concerns, use different social media sites, and follow different topics	32
Racial differences among Millennials in online activities and social media	34
VII. LOOKING AHEAD.....	34
VIII. About the Study.....	35
Survey Methodology	35
Qualitative Group Interviews.....	36
Contributing Researchers.....	37
About the Media Insight Project.....	38
Photo Credits.....	38

I. OVERVIEW

For years, researchers and social critics have worried that the newest generation of American adults is less interested in news than those who grew up in the pre-digital age.

Much of the concern has come from data that suggest adults age 18-34 – so-called Millennials – do not visit news sites, read print newspapers, watch television news, or seek out news in great numbers. This generation, instead, spends more time on social networks, often on mobile devices. The worry is that Millennials’ awareness of the world, as a result, is narrow, their discovery of events is incidental and passive, and that news is just one of many random elements in a social feed.¹

A new comprehensive study that looks closely at how people learn about the world on these different devices and platforms finds that this newest generation of American adults is anything but “newsless,”² passive, or civically uninterested.

Millennials consume news and information in strikingly different ways than previous generations, and their paths to discovery are more nuanced and varied than some may have imagined, according to the new study by the Media Insight Project, a collaboration of the American Press Institute and the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

How Millennials get news

Percent of Millennials who...	
Say keeping up with the news is at least somewhat important to them	85%
Get news daily	69%
Regularly follow five or more “hard news” topics	45%
Usually see diverse opinions through social media	86%
Pay for at least one news-specific service, app, or digital subscription	40%

This generation tends not to consume news in discrete sessions or by going directly to news providers. Instead, news and information are woven into an often continuous but mindful way that Millennials connect to the world generally, which mixes news with social connection, problem solving, social action, and entertainment.

Rather than having a narrowing effect on what Millennials know about, however, the data suggest this form of discovery may widen awareness.

Virtually all Millennials, for instance, regularly consume a mix of hard news, lifestyle news, and practical “news you can use,” the study finds. Millennials are more likely to report following politics, crime, technology, their local community, and social issues than report following popular culture and

¹ These concerns have been raised repeatedly by researchers and authors, including Paula M. Poindexter in *Millennials, News and Social Media: Is News Engagement a Thing of the Past?* (Peter Lang Publishing, 2012); by various work from the Pew Research Center, <http://www.poynter.org/news/mediawire/225139/pew-surveys-of-audience-habits-suggest-perilous-future-for-news/>; and by political researchers such as Mark Mellman in “The Young and the Newsless,” <http://thehill.com/opinion/mark-mellman/230946-mark-mellman-the-young-and-the-newsless>.

² The term appears in Poindexter’s book, in Mellman’s writing, and is the title of a book by Christina Tangora Schlachter, *Newsless: How the American Media is Destroying Democracy* (CSRL Publishing, 2009).

celebrities, or style and fashion. Fully 45 percent of these young adults regularly follow five or more “hard news” topics.

Millennials also appear to be drawn into news that they might otherwise have ignored because peers are recommending and contextualizing it for them on social networks, as well as on more private networks such as group texts and instant messaging. Once they encounter news, moreover, nearly 9 in 10 report usually seeing diverse opinions, and three-quarters of those report investigating opinions different than their own.

The data also suggest that social networks are exposing Millennials to more news than they were initially seeking. Overall, just 47 percent who use Facebook say that getting news is a main motivation for visiting, but it has become one of the significant activities they engage in once they are there. Fully 88 percent of Millennials get news from Facebook regularly, for instance, and more than half of them do so daily.

Some people, particularly older Millennials, are more inclined to actively seek news, while others tend to let news find them, but virtually all Millennials employ a blend of both methods, as well as a mix of platforms and activities.

“Social media keeps me more informed than I could be with the other forms of news,” said Elese, a 25-year-old in Chicago. “By quickly scrolling through my feed, I can see the major stories going on. If I need to read deeper into it, I can go to a credible source’s website.”

These are some of the findings of the study, which extends the work from the Media Insight Project’s 2014 Personal News Cycle³ to provide a deeper investigation of the news and information habits of Millennials age 18-34. For this work, researchers combined different research methods, including in-depth interviews in four different cities and a national survey.

Facebook is not the only social network Millennials use for news. On average, those surveyed get news from more than three social media platforms – including YouTube (83 percent), and Instagram (50 percent), and places of active involvement such as Reddit.

While social media plays an enormous role – and for some topics a preeminent one – in how Millennials learn about the world, the research also reveals that this manner of encountering news is not strictly passive or random. People actively navigate and make choices about which sources in their social media feeds they consider to be reliable, and they take other steps of participating in news as well, including posting news stories, commenting on them, liking or favoriting them, and forwarding them to others.

People have always “discovered” news events partly by accident, by word-of-mouth, or by bumping into it while watching TV news or listening to the radio, and then turning to other sources to learn more. Technology, and the facility with which Millennials use it, has made this mix of random and intentional learning far greater.

“Social media has evolved a lot,” said Marilu, a 29-year-old in Chicago. “Before, it would be all about you. Now it’s about a lot of sharing articles, sharing of videos, sharing of memes. There’s a lot of that.”

³The Media Insight Project. 2014. “The Personal News Cycle.” <http://www.mediainsight.org/Pages/the-personal-news-cycle.aspx>.

Among the study's findings:

- While Millennials are highly equipped, it is not true they are constantly connected. More than 90 percent of adults age 18-34 surveyed own smartphones, and half own tablets. But only half (51 percent) say they are online most or all of the day.
- Email is the most common digital activity, but news is a significant part of the online lives of Millennials, as well. Fully 69 percent report getting news at least once a day – 40 percent several times a day.
- Millennials acquire news for many reasons, which include a fairly even mix of civic motivations (74 percent), problem-solving needs (63 percent), and social factors (67 percent) such as talking about it with friends.
- Contrary to the idea that social media creates a polarizing “filter bubble,” exposing people to only a narrow range of opinions, 70 percent of Millennials say that their social media feeds are comprised of diverse viewpoints evenly mixed between those similar to and different from their own. An additional 16 percent say their feeds contain mostly viewpoints different from their own. And nearly three-quarters of those exposed to different views (73 percent) report they investigate others’ opinions at least some of the time – with a quarter saying they do it always or often.
- Facebook has become a nearly ubiquitous part of digital Millennial life. On 24 separate news and information topics probed, Facebook was the No. 1 gateway to learn about 13 of those, and the second-most cited gateway for seven others.
- At the same time, younger Millennials express growing frustration with Facebook, and there are signals in the research that the use of social media will continue to splinter with time. Younger Millennials use more social networks (an average of four) than older ones (who average three). They are also more likely than older ones to have cut back on their social media use or dropped a social network completely. In our longer interviews, these younger Millennials describe Facebook like a utility they have to use rather than one they enjoy.
- When Millennials want to dig deeper on a subject, search is the dominant method cited by 57 percent (and it is the one cited most often as useful), followed by news sites (23 percent). Only 7 percent cite checking Facebook to learn more.
- And when Millennials do dig deeper, the most important qualities that make a destination useful are that they know the source well (57 percent) and that this digital source is transparent and rich with references and links (52 percent).
- Millennials, however, do not worry much about privacy. Only 2 in 10 worry a good deal about privacy in general. And when asked about specific concerns, only 22 percent worry even a little about government surveillance; 30 percent worry even a little about corporate America knowing too much about them. The biggest worry, 38 percent, is identity theft.
- Despite this lack of overall concern, the vast majority of Millennials (86 percent) have changed their behavior online, mostly to control what people know about them. Fifty-two percent have changed their privacy settings, while 37 percent say they are now more likely to remove information or photos of themselves that are embarrassing or immature.

ABOUT THE STUDY

This study was conducted by the Media Insight Project, a collaboration between the American Press Institute and the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. It included two components – a quantitative survey of Millennials nationwide and qualitative interviews and follow-up exercises with small friend groups of Millennials in Chicago, Illinois; San Francisco and Oakland, California; and at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia. The researchers sought to supplement the quantitative survey research with a qualitative component to obtain a deeper understanding of Millennials' online lives and news consumption habits.

The survey reached 1,045 adults nationwide between the ages of 18 and 34. Study recruitment was completed through a national probability telephone sample, while the main portion of the questionnaire was administered online. The margin of error was +/- 3.8 percentage points.

The qualitative component included three semi-structured group interviews conducted in Chicago, Illinois, on December 11, 2014; two conducted in San Francisco, California, on January 7, 2015; two conducted in Oakland, California, on January 7-8, 2015; and three conducted at the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, Virginia, on January 22, 2015. A total of 23 Millennials were interviewed. Select participants in each of the locations also consented to complete follow-up activities. These activities included 1) a self-reflection, interview, and essay exercise about news attitudes and behaviors, and 2) a news story tracking diary. These exercises were intended to gather additional information about how these Millennials think about news and information, what news and information is important to them, and how they follow a news story of interest. A total of 10 participants completed one of the follow-up exercises.

All point estimates described in the report are derived from the nationally representative survey of adults age 18 to 34. All quotes specified in the report are derived from the qualitative research. A full description of the study methodology can be found at the end of the report.

II. MILLENNIALS ARE HARDLY NEWSLESS, UNINTERESTED, OR DISENGAGED FROM NEWS AND THE WORLD AROUND THEM

By any number of measures, staying in touch with the world is an important part of the lives of the first generation of digital adults.

Yet rather than news consumption occurring at certain times of the day as a defined activity – in “news sessions” – keeping up with the world is part of being connected and becoming aware more generally, and it often but not always occurs online. In many cases, news comes as part of social flow, something that may happen unexpectedly and serendipitously as people check to see what's new with their network or community of friends. At other times news is something they seek out on their own. Most see news as an enjoyable or entertaining experience.

All of this reinforces findings from a previous study by the Media Insight Project entitled the Personal News Cycle.⁴ That research provided a broad challenge to the notion that these young digitally native adults are uninterested or are turning away from news about the world. Across a range of metrics – frequency, enjoyment,⁵ variety of topic interests, and more – younger adults are engaged news consumers.

NEWS IS A BIG PART OF MILLENNIALS' ONLINE ACTIVITY

The world is now literally in the pockets of the vast majority of Millennials much of the day. Fully 94 percent of those surveyed own smartphones connected to the internet. That compares with 69 percent of adults of all ages in our Personal News Cycle survey a year earlier. Fifty percent use a tablet, compared with 39 percent of all adults in the earlier survey.

What's more, when asked how much of their news and information comes from online sources, 82 percent say at least half of it. The average Millennial reports getting 74 percent of her news from online sources, and that does not vary much by age or other demographic factors.

This does not mean all Millennials are constantly connected. Only about half, 51 percent, say they are connected most of the time. When they are online, news ranks relatively high among the list of activities, particularly those they engage in daily.

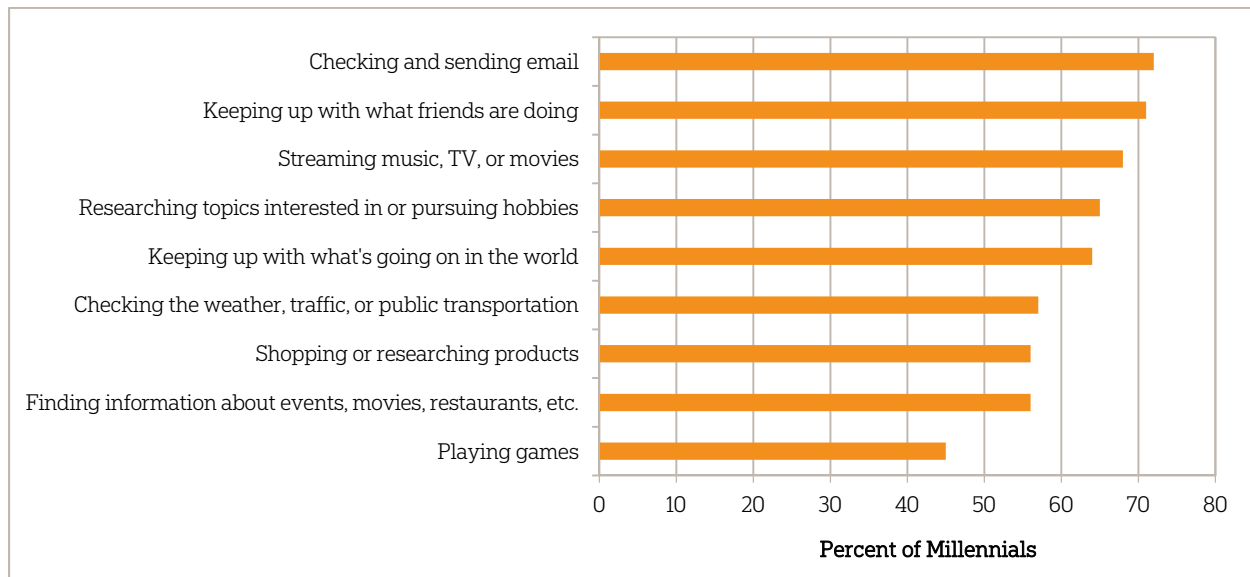
Just under two-thirds (64 percent) of Millennials say that they regularly keep up with what's going on in the world and/or read or watch news.

This puts news roughly in the middle of a list of nine online activities that the survey asked about, but close to the most popular ones. Keeping up with the news falls only slightly behind the three most popular digital activities: checking and sending email (72 percent), keeping up with what friends are doing (71 percent), and streaming music, TV, or movies (68 percent).

Keeping up with the world and news ranks about the same as researching hobbies and other topics of interest (65 percent), and ahead of shopping or researching products (56 percent); finding information about events, movies, restaurants, etc. (56 percent); or playing games (45 percent). Fifty-seven percent report going online regularly for a practical form of the news – checking the weather, traffic, or public transportation.

⁴ The Media Insight Project. 2014. "The Personal News Cycle." <http://www.mediainsight.org/Pages/the-personal-news-cycle.aspx>.

⁵ The Personal News Cycle study from early 2014 offers some sense of how Millennials' enjoyment with news compares with other age groups. Thirty-five percent of 18- to 34-year-olds in that study report that they enjoy keeping up with the news a lot compared to 63 percent of those 35 years and older. Still though, 85 percent of 18-to 34-year-olds said they get at least some enjoyment from keeping up with the news, similar to the 89 percent of adults 35 and over who said the same. These numbers are somewhat higher than what different questions asked in surveys by the Pew Research Center. Its latest research found that 29 percent of people age 18-31 said they enjoyed following the news a lot, versus 45 percent of those age 33-47 and 58 percent of those age 48 or older. One reason for the difference is what we have discovered in this report, that Millennials do not "follow" news in long news sessions the way previous generations did, but consume it as part of other engagement. In this study, we have asked people to place their motivations for acquiring news on a list or scale.

More than 6 in 10 Millennials regularly keep up with news and information when online

Question: Which of the following activities, if any, would you say you do regularly online? Please select all that apply.

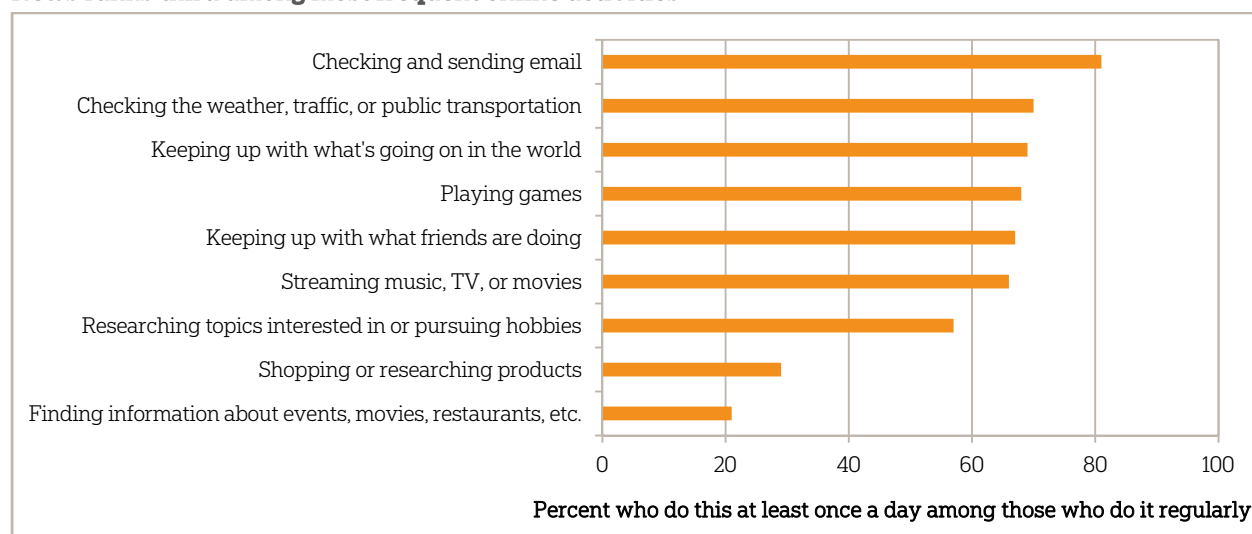
To get a stronger sense of the intensity of this news acquisition, the study probed not just where news ranked on the list but also *how often* they acquired news online. We found that news ranked even higher among Millennials' online priorities by this measure. Of the 64 percent who say they regularly keep up with the news online, about 7 in 10 (69 percent) do so at least once a day, and 40 percent do so multiple times a day.

That is similar to the proportion who say they keep up with their friends at least once a day (67 percent) and the proportion streaming music, TV, or movies (66 percent) daily. Indeed, keeping up with the news ranks below only checking and sending email (81 percent) and checking weather, traffic, and public transportation (70 percent) as activities these younger Americans do every day.

More Millennials keep up with news online at least once a day than pursue hobbies (57 percent), research products (29 percent), and find information about restaurants or movie times (21 percent).

In Millennials' Words: What are the top three things you do online?

"Probably top three would be I use Facebook a lot to talk to my friends, like a big group chat because we all go to different colleges. And then my next one would be Netflix; I watch a lot of that. And then I go on Reddit a lot and other news things."
**– Connor, sophomore,
University of Mary
Washington**

News ranks third among most frequent online activities**MILLENNIALS HAVE A MIX OF MOTIVATIONS – CIVIC, SOCIAL, AND PRACTICAL – FOR KEEPING UP WITH NEWS**

One question is whether this news acquisition is accidental or whether Millennials are conscious and motivated to learn about the world around them.

To get at this, the survey and qualitative interviews probed three different areas about motivation. The first asked how important news was to people in general. The second explored a list of reasons that people use news. The third asked why people choose to go to platforms such as Facebook and Twitter in the first place, and then what they do when they get there.

The findings suggest that Millennials view news as fairly important and use it in ways that are an almost equal mix of social, civic, and practical. They also acquire more news on social media than they set out to.

Overall, nearly 4 in 10 Millennials (38 percent) say it is very or extremely important to them personally to keep up with the news. An additional 47 percent consider it somewhat important. The same sentiment was echoed in our in-depth, qualitative discussions with younger adults. One reason that news is important, some said, is that they see so much of it in social media feeds. The news, in effect, is already contextualized as important to their lives because it is important to the members of their social networks.

**In Millennials' Words:
What role does news play in your life?**

"The news plays a big role in my life. Between school and work, I need to keep up-to-date with certain aspects of the news. I access the news everyday via the internet and social media. I usually use my laptop or smartphone to access news. Usually, it is easy to find breaking news on my [Facebook] news feed. I also follow certain news outlets and groups that constantly post different articles on the news that I am interested in." – Breanna, age 25, Chicago

**"It would be best to keep up with this type of thing [Ferguson protests] because even though it's out of town, even though it's in a different state, it affects us, because people out here are taking this out on our city as well. We're protesting out here, so we have to be safe."
– Stephanie, age 34, Oakland**

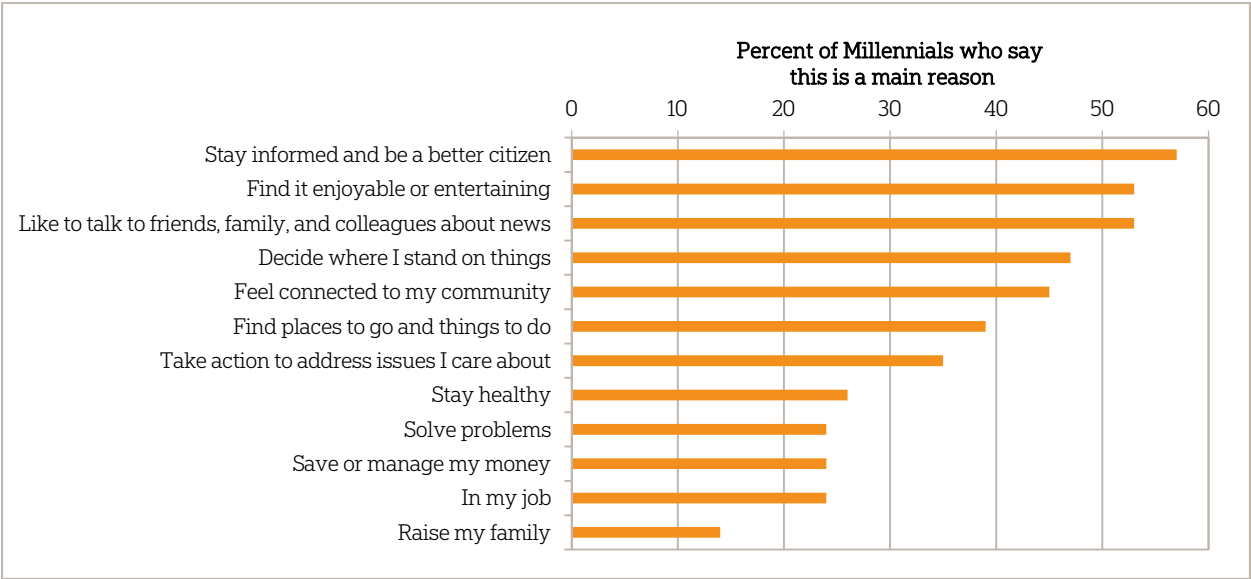
In our qualitative discussions, we also heard about another factor that makes news important to some younger adults. This has to do with the notion that, partly because technology is so altering modern life, their generation is changing the world for the better, and they are excited to see how that is happening. The news tells them that.

“I have so much faith in my generation to change the course of this country, and I love seeing that play out in the news, whether it be through health care changes, gay marriage acceptance, sexual education and access to information, and race issues,” said Lauren, age 23 in Chicago. “Sure, 1 out of every 10 articles I read about these issues is sensationalized, but for the most part I have so much respect for the impact that my generation is making on these social issues, and I love staying up-to-date on the justice that is happening for the poor, the discriminated, etc.”

The survey also asked people about how they use the news. We asked about 13 different ways that people might use news, which fell into three general categories. One category was civic (such as helping me be a better citizen, take action on issues I care about, or identify where I stand on issues). A second category was social (so I can talk about the news with friends or feel connected). The third category was practical (to help save money, stay healthy, or solve problems).

Millennials are fairly evenly split in their motivations for getting news and information. Seventy-four percent report following the news for at least one civic reason. Sixty-seven percent cite social reasons, and 63 percent cite at least one practical or “news-you-can-use” reason like finding things to do or managing money.

Becoming an informed citizen is the number one reason cited for using news and information



Question: People use news and information in different ways. What are the main reasons you, personally, tend to use news and information? Please select all that apply.

Finally, as we will discuss in more detail later, news may not be the reason that people initially go to Facebook or Twitter, but it has become one of the biggest activities they engage in when they are there.

NEWS AS PART OF THE CONNECTED LIFE

For most Millennials, the way they learn about the world is a blend of actively seeking out some news and information and bumping into other information as they do other things throughout their day. Many of their encounters with news occur online.

When asked to choose which comes closer to their behavior on a typical day, 60 percent of Millennials overall say that they mostly bump into news and information as they do other things, while 39 percent say they actively seek out news and information.

Those who see themselves as more proactive news consumers are more likely than those who mostly bump into news to cite some reasons for consuming news. For instance, they are more likely to say that news helps them stay informed and be better citizens (66 percent vs. 52 percent) and that they like to talk to friends, family, and colleagues about news (63 percent vs. 46 percent). They are also more likely to say it helps them feel connected to their communities (52 percent vs. 41 percent), and to feel that it helps them take action on issues they care about (41 percent vs. 31 percent).

But the data show an intra-generational divide. Only a third of the youngest Millennials, those under age 25, describe themselves as mostly proactive news consumers. By contrast, fully half of those over age 30 do so. These older Millennials are evenly divided between those who mostly seek out news and those who mostly bump into it.

When the research probed more deeply by topic, as described in a later section of this report, it reveals that almost all Millennials engage in both kinds of news acquisition – more proactive and random – no matter what their age.

III. MILLENNIALS' NUANCED PATHS TO NEWS AND INFORMATION

A good deal of past research about this newest generation of adults has focused on technology use. That research has revealed Millennials spend a good deal of their time on social media rather than heading directly to news destinations on the web. That in turn may have encouraged the idea that civic awareness is at risk.

This study set out to go further, to learn not just where people go online but what they do when they get there. Platforms such as Facebook or search engines such as Google are gateways to many activities, not just personal and social information. And asking people about how much they get “news” in a generic sense can be elusive. What do people think of as news? Does it include traffic and weather, food and restaurants, sports scores?

To solve this problem, this study probed what topics people pay attention to and how they get information about them. The survey probed 24 different topics, all of which increasingly today

In Millennials' Words: How easy or hard is it to find news and information these days?

Easy: “Very easy. If it’s something big, it’s going to be on social media within seconds. You’re going to see it. It doesn’t take that long for anything to start trending.” – Sam, age 19, San Francisco

Hard: “I feel like you have to scout for [general news]. It’s not easy for me to get public news. I had no idea about the French terrorist [event]. I only caught a glimpse of that a couple of days ago on the TV in the restaurant.” – Liz, sophomore, University of Mary Washington

might be found in news products such as newspapers, TV news broadcasts, or online-only news websites.⁶ The qualitative interviews we conducted were even more open ended, asking people about what subjects they spend the most time with online.

The findings debunk the notion that younger Americans are choosing to focus their attention on only a few things, particularly so-called soft news and entertainment, or, in the famous phrase of critic Neil Postman, that we are “amusing ourselves to death.”

Millennials regularly follow a wide range of topics, and virtually everyone’s information diet in this generation involves a mix of hard news, soft news, and more practical or news-you-can-use topics.

Moreover, these digital natives are rational and discriminating in how they employ different information sources for different types of news – using social networks and word-of-mouth more for certain topics suited to those platforms, going directly to news reporting organizations for topics where professional news gathering from a single source has high value, and actively turning to search engines and news aggregators when seeking multiple sources and community input makes sense for the topic.

MILLENNIALS FOLLOW MANY TOPICS, INCLUDING INFORMATION ABOUT ENTERTAINMENT, NEWS, AND THEIR DAILY LIVES

To begin with, Millennials follow news about a wide variety of subjects and do so across a range of sources. The average Millennial reports regularly following 9.5 different news and information topics among the 24 included on the survey.

The most popular topic is “TV, music, and movies.” Two out of three Millennials say they follow news about it on a regular basis.

The second-highest proportion of Millennials, more than 60 percent, regularly get news and information about a hobby.

But more civically oriented news topics are a significant part of the information diet of this generation, too. More people under 35 say they follow politics, crime, technology, their local community, and social issues, for instance, than report following popular culture and celebrities or style and fashion.

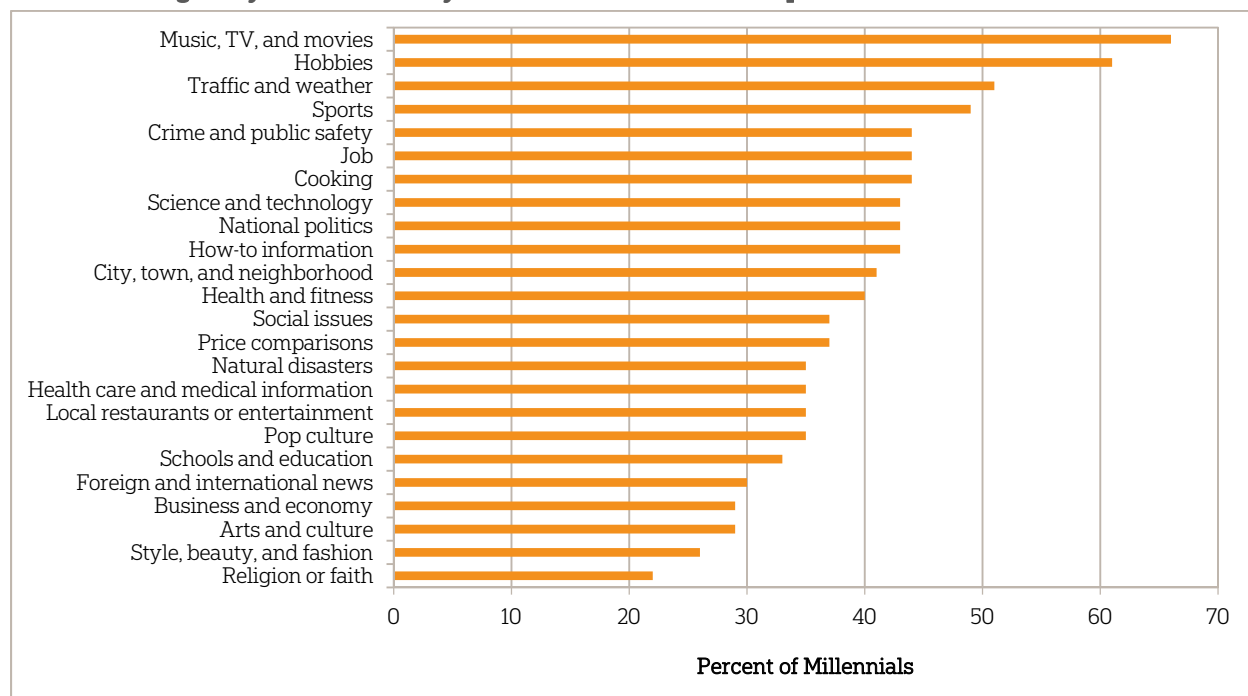
Nearly all of these young adults follow what are traditionally considered “hard” news topics.⁷ The average Millennial follows about four hard news topics and 45 percent of Millennials follow 5 or more.

“I think there’s a lot of news out there these days, and I feel that if you limit yourself to just watching what’s on the news on TV, you’re not getting the whole picture. And I feel that a lot of, maybe, newer news places, there’s so much more you can get online to kind of supplement what you see on TV that you can get closer to the truth and find what you’re looking for.”

– Connor, sophomore, University of Mary Washington

⁶ News and information was defined in the survey as follows: By news and information, we mean the information that you use to understand the world around you. This can include sports, traffic, weather, current events, stocks, politics, lifestyle, entertainment, or any other kinds of news or information that you need to understand the world around you.

⁷ Hard news topics include: Social issues; Crime and public safety; Natural disasters and environment; Religion or faith; National politics and government; Science and technology; Business and economy; Traffic and weather; City, town, and neighborhood; Foreign affairs; Schools and education; and Health care.

Millennials regularly follow a variety of news and information topics

Question: Which of these topics, if any, do you regularly follow?

Interest in hard news is not correlated with age. Younger Millennials are just as likely to follow hard news topics as older ones. In our qualitative interviews, we saw what may be clear reasons why. Virtually everyone we talked to had some areas of passion or deep interest, which may have been related to career, heritage, travel experience, or some other factor. And they tended to be quite conscious and active in the ways they sought information about those areas, identifying experts that they followed, news organizations that they trusted, and more.

"I do a lot of research on genetic engineering, so I look up what scientists in the world are doing. Biology and chemical research," said Kristina, a student at the University of Mary Washington. "I do like to keep up with celebrities, and then I'm very big into heroes and stuff, so comics."

In Millennials' Words: What news and information topics do you follow?

"I definitely follow all the political events. Also, current events, like the most volatile things that are going on around the country. I like national news. Also, I follow celebrity news — I have to admit that."

— Lauren, age 23, Chicago

"I woke up this morning and checked Bleacher Report, which is a sports blog. I check game scores. I check all the latest trade rumors and everything like that. I check a music website called ILLROOTS.com and then from there I see all the latest news on the artists I like to keep up with, their songs and music videos. Just looking up music and just trying to see what my favorite artists are doing right now."

— Sam, age 19, San Francisco

THE POWERFUL ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA, ESPECIALLY FACEBOOK, IN THE NEWS AND INFORMATION LIVES OF YOUNG ADULTS

Even though it is not the only path to news, social networks play a preeminent role in Millennials' news acquisition, even as many Millennials express frustration with it, particularly the youngest.

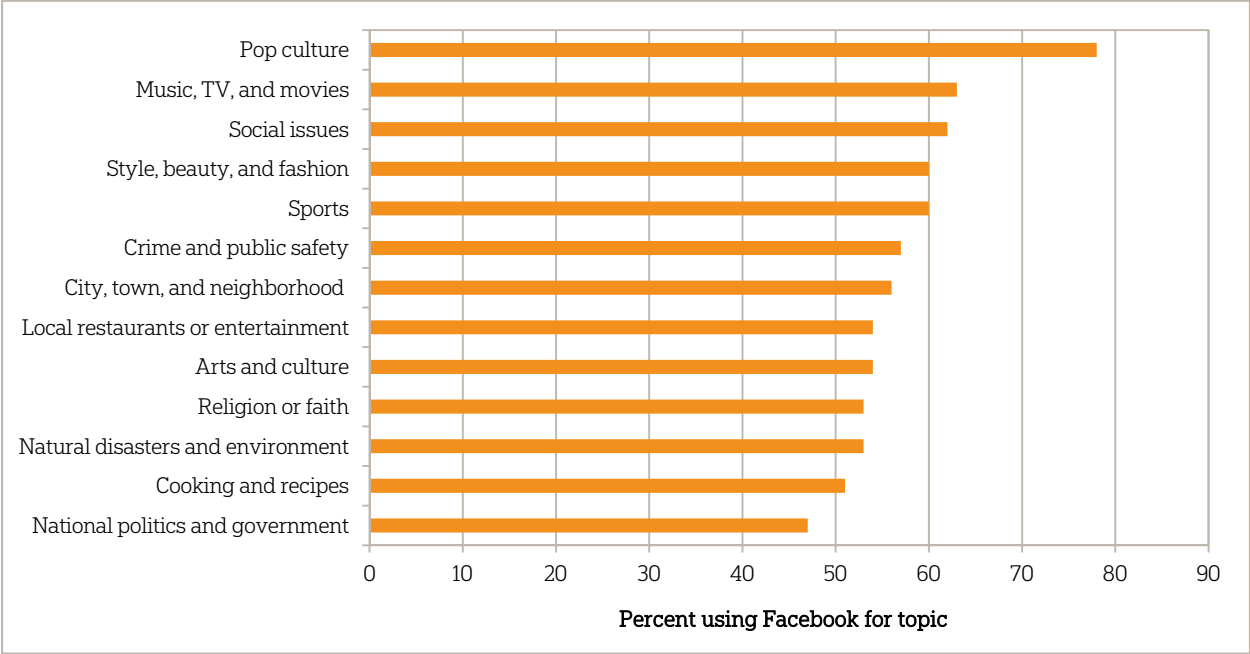
Facebook's outsized role is evident by any number of metrics. Of the 24 different news and information topics asked about, for instance, Facebook ranked as the No. 1 gateway for 13 and the second-most popular choice for seven others – meaning it ranked No. 1 or 2 for 20 out of 24 topics.

For 9 of the 24 topics, Facebook was the only destination cited by a majority.

"[Social media] has introduced me to a lot of news that I wouldn't have known about or wasn't paying attention to."
- Haley, age 22, San Francisco

In other words, although most of these people had multiple ways of getting information on these topics, more of them included Facebook in that mix than any other place.

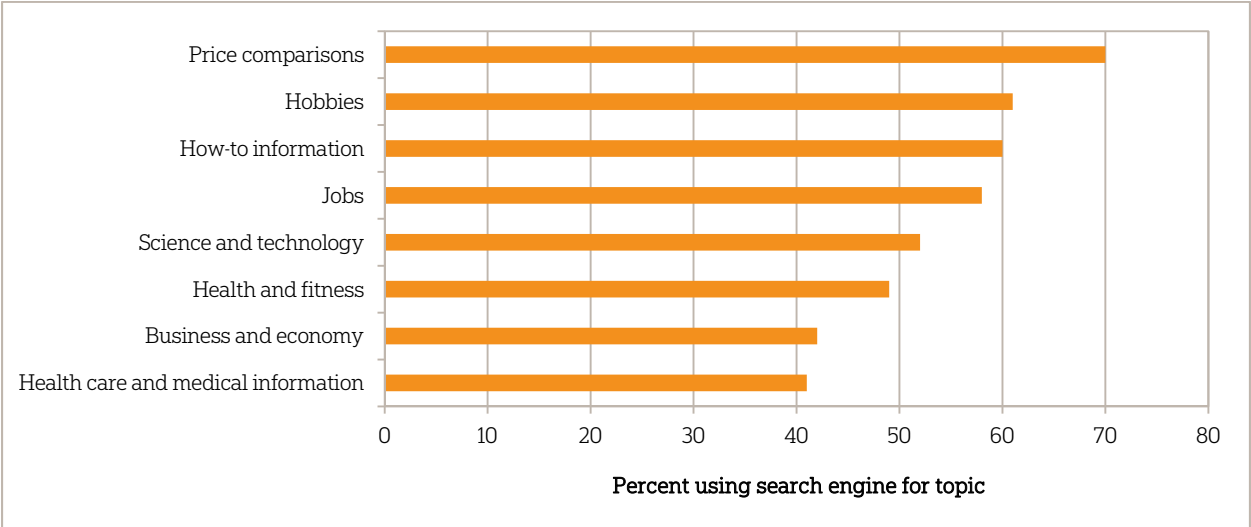
Topics for which Facebook is the most common point of access



Question: Where do you most often get your information on this topic? Please select all that apply.

Search ranked as the second-most common means of acquiring news and information. It was the most cited way of accessing news for 8 of the 24 information topics asked about, and it was the second-most cited means for five more, meaning it was No. 1 or 2 on 13 of the 24.

Topics for which search is the most common point of access



Question: Where do you most often get your information on this topic? Please select all that apply.

Topics for which other sources are most popular

Topic	Source
Schools and education	Word of mouth (46%)
Foreign and international news	National TV (43%)
Traffic and weather	Local TV (49%)

Question: Where do you most often get your information on this topic? Please select all that apply.

No other single platform (such as national TV, specialized news sources, newspapers, or even other social media platforms) ranked first or second for more than six topics.

Simply put, social media is no longer simply social. It long ago stopped being just a way to stay in touch with friends. It has become a way of being connected to the world generally – to send messages, follow channels of interest, get news, share news, talk about it, be entertained, stay in touch, and to check in and see what’s new in the world.

At the same time, in our qualitative interviews, we also repeatedly heard a pushback against Facebook and to some degree social networks as an environment. Various people told us they are beginning to see Facebook and other platforms as

In Millennials’ Words: And how do you use search engines for news?

“I use Google at first [to find news]. Sometimes I’ll go to specific sources, because I use Google just to get like a broad sense and then I’ll try to narrow that.”
– Adriana, age 23, San Francisco

“Who’s playing? Oh, Warriors and Cleveland. You just Google Warriors Cavaliers score, right there. It just comes right up.”
– Steve, age 20, Oakland

places that are often prone to negativity, that some people use to start arguments, or that are filled with useless, inaccurate, or untrustworthy information.

Adriana, age 23 from San Francisco, does not like what she sees on Facebook. “I have [a Facebook account]. I don’t really use it. It’s a stupid thing. It kind of turned into useless information, like 15 reasons this, 20 reasons that.”

They also expressed concern about the amount of time they spend on social networks and whether they were wasting time and being distracted.

In another San Francisco interview, Sam, age 19, put into words the sentiment of many interview subjects. “I use Facebook, too. But I don’t like to ... anymore,” he said. “I’m trying to scale back because it’s really time consuming, and you can get addicted. And it takes up a lot of valuable time that I could do something else.”

It isn’t only Facebook he has tried to get control of. “I’ve noticed since I’ve gotten off of Twitter, I’ve been a lot more attentive at work and what’s going on around me instead of being on social media and looking at somebody’s picture from a thousand miles away.”

MILLENNIALS GET NEWS AND INFORMATION FROM A VARIETY OF PLACES AND WHERE THEY GO IS TOPIC DRIVEN

Although the number of Millennials who get news through Facebook and social media is large, it would be a mistake to think that Millennials get all their news this way.

Virtually every one of these digitally native young adults surveyed and interviewed use a blend of paths to news, mixing social, search, aggregators, online-only news sites, and traditional reporting sources such as newspapers, television, and specialized media.

To understand this, we divided the various news platforms and sources into three basic categories that represent different pathways to news and information.

One pathway is *social*. Here people tend to bump into news organized by their social network. Social includes Facebook, Twitter, various other social media platforms, and traditional word-of-mouth.

A second pathway to information is *curated*. Here users seek out these platforms to find news from many sources organized by subject, either sorted by algorithm, human editors, or a combination. Curated media includes search, aggregators, and blogs.

In Millennials’ Words: What’s the role of social media when it comes to news and information?

According to two friends from Chicago:

“So if you’re on your Facebook or Twitter there’s a handful, maybe five things that are trending. It’s up to you to click on it and then you’ll see more. But if you don’t click on it you just see those things like, ‘Oh wow, an Eric Gardner story. That’s sad, that’s terrible.’ But if you don’t actually click on it, you don’t read it. But you see it. So like you know something’s going on, but you’re not knowledgeable.”

– Lauren, age 23

“I think social media used to be just personal. Facebook was just keeping in touch with friends. And then I think maybe when Twitter came around, it wasn’t just posting pictures, it was statuses. Then it became this 140-character thing and that got the ball rolling with news. And then Facebook got on board and it like slowly became more news-centered, whereas before it was personal.”

– Elese, age 23

The third pathway to news and information is *reportorial media*. These are content creators with teams of news gatherers, whether legacy publishers or new digital only publishers. While people may end up at these destinations by other means, when they seek out these sources directly – by watching a newscast, using a news organization’s app, reading a newspaper in print or digitally – they are turning to an individual organization to get information. The reported media includes all legacy organizations (local and national TV, newspaper media, and radio), online content creators, and specialty media (ethnic, sports media, specialty magazines, etc.).

Which path people use, the data reveal, tends to depend on the topic they want to learn about.

Millennials tend to lean toward social media, though not exclusively, for what might be considered “soft news” or lifestyle topics, such as popular culture, music, film and TV, local restaurants and entertainment, and style and beauty. About three-quarters of Millennials who follow these topics report using at least one social source.

The only so-called lifestyle or entertainment topic where social was not the most popular path was sports. Here people were more inclined to turn to reporting organizations directly.

Original reporting sources are also important destinations for at least three of these eight lifestyle topics. More than 7 in 10 Millennials cite them as paths to information about the arts, celebrities, and music/TV/film.

Social platforms predominate as the gateway to lifestyle news

Topic	Percent use a social source	Percent use a reporting source	Percent use a curated source
Celebrities or pop culture	91	77	49
Food and cooking	80	51	61
Health and fitness	74	54	64
Local restaurants or entertainment	82	57	59
Music, TV, and movies	82	70	55
Sports	78	84	41
Style, beauty, and fashion	84	52	54
The arts and culture	83	71	66

*Shading indicates most commonly cited source type for each topic.

Twelve of the 24 subjects analyzed might be traditionally considered “hard news” topics. For six of these, Millennials are most likely to get their news directly from a reporting organization – including such subjects as government, business, international news, health care, the environment, and traffic and weather.

For these hard news topics, Millennials rely in large numbers on reporting media. More than 6 in 10 Millennials cited at least one reporting source for all but one of the 12 hard news topics.

For hard news topics, Millennials continue to embrace original news reporting sources.

Topic	Percent use a social source	Percent use a reporting source	Percent use a curated source
Business and the economy	64	77	58
Crime and public safety	73	77	46
Foreign or international news	63	77	57
Health care and medical information	63	68	56
Information about my city, town, or neighborhood	77	77	42
National politics and government	68	76	53
Religion and faith	81	51	46
Schools and education	74	68	53
Science and technology	65	63	69
Social issues like abortion, race, and gay rights	79	69	53
The environment and natural disasters	69	77	55
Traffic or weather	48	75	46

*Shading indicates most commonly cited source type for each topic.

Finally, people tend to look to curated media for subjects that might be considered practical or news-you-can-use-topics, such as product information, how-to advice, hobbies, and news or information about their career.

Including search engines, news and information aggregators like Google News, and blogs (where curation is typically an important function), at least 7 in 10 Millennials cite these types of sources for practical topics.

There are also a few topics for which there is no favored path, or for which people use at least two of them equally. For instance, Millennials have no clear preferred path to news about science and technology. Social, curated, and reporting platforms are cited equally for these topics.

Similarly, Millennials are just as inclined to cite social platforms as reporting organizations for crime or public safety news and news about their town or neighborhood. And they are just as likely to cite curated sources as social pathways to get how-to advice.

Search engines and news aggregators are most often utilized for “news you can use”

Topic	Percent use a social source	Percent use a reporting source	Percent use a curated source
Advice or how-to information	72	48	73
Information related to my interests or hobbies	79	49	70
Information related to my job, industry, or profession	66	56	73
Price comparisons or product research	58	38	79

*Shading indicates most commonly cited source type for each topic.

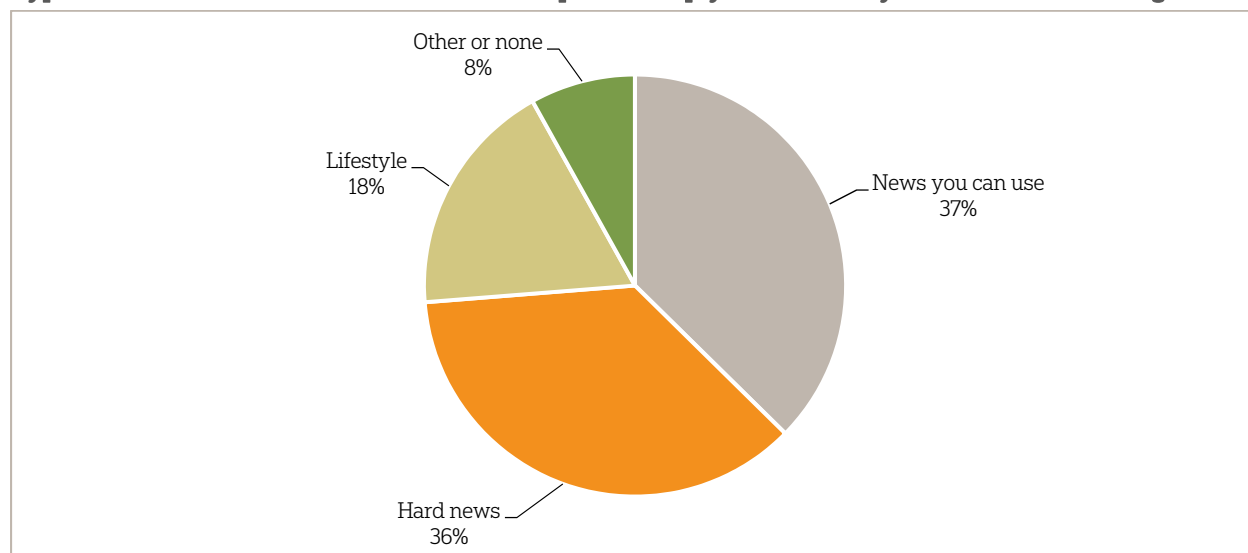
The virtue of looking at news consumption this way is that it reveals something more nuanced than simply the prevalence of Facebook in people's digital lives and news environment. The great majority of Millennials, on almost every topic, actually find news multiple ways.

What's more, as we will see later when we explore what Millennials do *after* they encounter news on social media, even bumping into news may lead to more active participation and engagement by sharing, commenting, or investigating differing perspectives and opinions.

HOWEVER THEY FIRST DISCOVERED IT, WHEN MILLENNIALS WANT TO LEARN MORE, THEY MOST OFTEN TURN TO SEARCH

In both the qualitative interviews and the survey, we also asked people to recall the last time they delved more deeply into a subject online.

Types of news and information Millennials explored deeply last time they looked into something online



Question: Now thinking of the last time you spent a fair amount of time online getting news or information, or learning about something. We mean looking into something fairly deeply, not just casually searching. What were you looking for?

We asked them first to identify in an open-ended question what the subject was. Those who recalled a subject (87 percent) were asked to recall where they went to learn more. Finally we asked if they could say which destination was most useful and why.

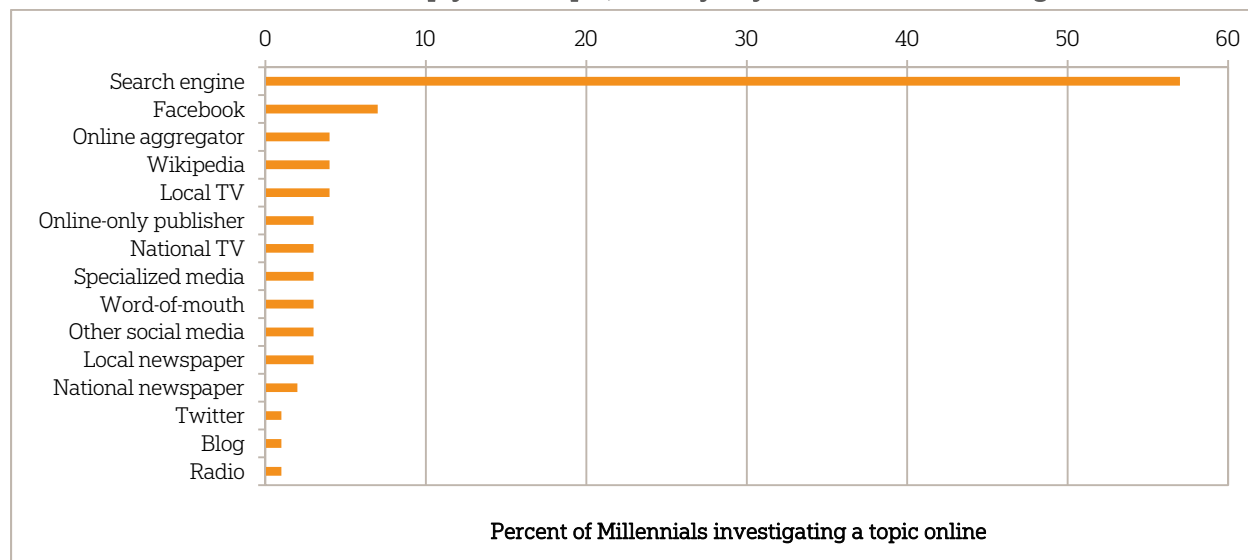
Millennials were most likely to say that their last deep dive was to find information about a subject that was a news-you-can-use topic or information about current events.

Nearly 4 in 10 Millennials (37 percent) who recalled a subject said that the last time they spent a fair amount of time online they were looking for practical, news-you-can-use information, such as advice or how-to information, researching products, or investigating topics related to school or career.

Millennials feel like they have control over their information environment. "It's so much easier to find what you're looking for. But it's also so much easier to cut out things that you would otherwise have seen, because it's so much easier to segregate information." – Shelton, sophomore, University of Mary Washington

The number of Millennials who said they delved more deeply into a current event/breaking news story or information on a major issue is nearly identical, at 36 percent.

When Millennials want to dive deeply into a topic, the majority first turn to search engines



Question: Where did you go first for information?

By contrast, about half as many, 18 percent, went deeper to find out more about a topic that was categorized as lifestyle, like sports, food and cooking, health and fitness, or music, TV, and movies.

Once people had recalled the last time they began looking more deeply for something online, we asked them where they turned first. More than half (57 percent) reported first going to a search engine to learn more. Nineteen percent cited a specific news organization (led at 7 percent by TV news and 5 percent by newspapers). Seven percent recalled going to Facebook; 4 percent said Wikipedia or a similar site.

From there, if people went to additional sources, they scattered in many directions. Eighteen percent said they went to Wikipedia or a similar site to follow up, 17 percent received information from word-of-mouth, 16 percent went to Facebook, and 16 percent went to a search engine.

And what kinds of sources, when people dove deeply into a topic, did they find most useful? Half of Millennials (50 percent) cited a search engine, which of course is a gateway to other sources. Another quarter cited some type of news organization. Again, just 7 percent cited Facebook as the most useful path for learning more, the same percentage that cited going there as their first choice for more information. And 3 percent cited Wikipedia.

In Millennials' Words: How do you decide what sources to use?

"I feel that the sources I look for, I take them with a grain of salt usually. If something's interesting and I think it's reliable, like okay, I'll believe that until I hear something else more convincing."

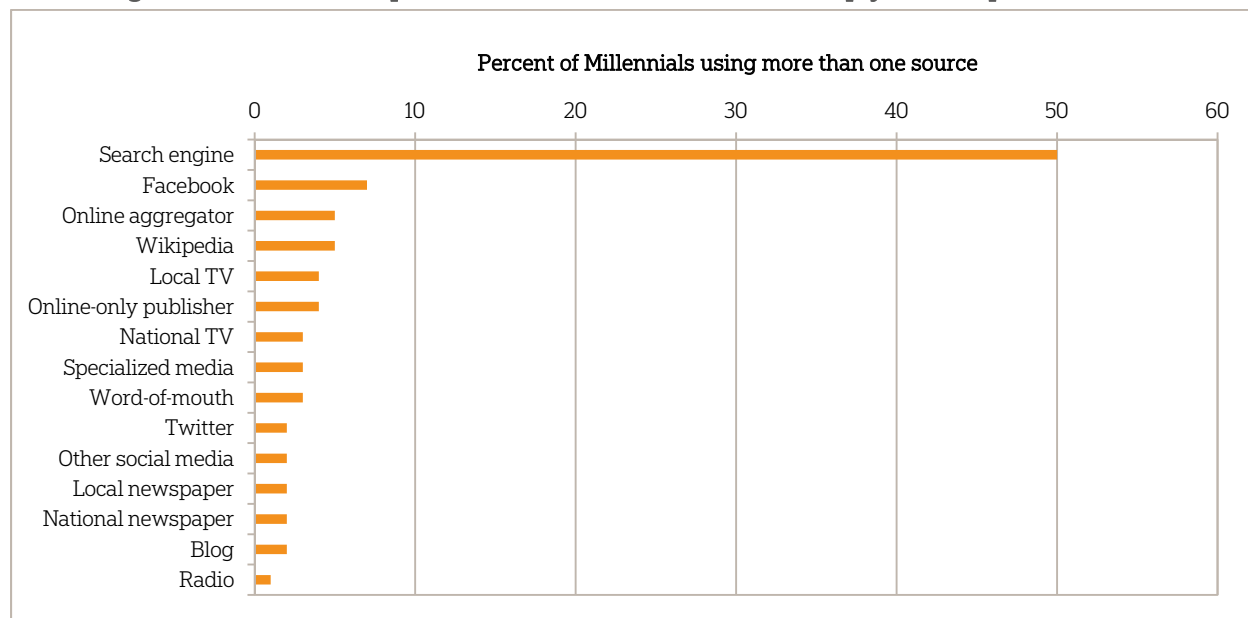
**– Connor, sophomore,
University of Mary Washington**

"[I like to] pick out facts [and] read a couple of different sources, so I have an idea of what to trust and what I don't trust."

– Lauren, age 23, Chicago

In other words, while Facebook is the most popular means of discovering something, when people want to dig in, they find other paths, including news organizations, more useful.

Search engines are the most helpful source when Millennials dive deeply into a topic



Question: Of the sources you used, which was the most useful to you?

We heard the same thing in our qualitative interviews. A Chicago interviewee, age 30, who asked not to be named said, “[I]f I’m on social media and I see people are posting about something, then I’m like, is this really factual information or is it possibly fictional information? And it triggers a domino effect for me to look at multiple other sites because I get curious sometimes. Then I can interpret things for myself. [A] lot of it starts at social media.”

And what made one destination more useful than another for those now actively trying to learn more? Was it simplicity of design, ease of navigation, quick load times or something else?

The answer appears to be that two factors make a web destination most useful: familiarity and transparency – or citations of sourcing, and links.

Fifty-seven percent reported a source is useful to them because they have used it a lot and usually get what they need.

About half also said a source was useful because it cited multiple sources and offered links to learn more (52 percent).

A smaller number, 41 percent, said a source was useful because the design made it easy to find what they needed. Brand reputation fell slightly further down the list, though this may also

In Millennials’ Words: What makes you question a source?

“Experience, educational background, and how they build their credibility.”

– Female, Chicago

“A lot of the times when I don’t even believe their stories because the website doesn’t look credible. Just like the font — just like the whole web layout — how the links are organized. It’s just like it doesn’t look professional at all.”

– Sam, age 19, San Francisco

be closely connected to the most popular reason – familiarity. But overall, 37 percent cited a long and trusted reputation as a factor that made a source useful or reliable. Only 19 percent said a source is useful because their friends use it and trust it.

We also asked people in the qualitative interviews what makes them skeptical of sources. The notion that every source is biased surfaced repeatedly. This is a generation steeped in having to navigate information on their own. We heard over and over that there is a lot of material out there that people have discovered is unreliable, and often highly subjective.

Shelton, a sophomore at the University of Mary Washington, said, “I understand that no matter what, there will be a slight tinge of bias from anyone giving out the news. I feel like someone whose job it is to give the news [should] make sure there is the least possible amount of bias. And unfortunately, I don’t see that a lot, nowadays.”

IV. DIGITAL LIVES OF MILLENNIALS

Born in 1980, this first generation of digital natives entered high school as the web became a public space. Half of this group, those age 26 and under, entered high school with social media, first MySpace and soon enough Facebook.

For most of this generation, in other words, the digital revolution does not represent disruption. It represents the norm and, to a significant degree, their generation’s opportunity.

Perhaps as a consequence, few Millennials are worried much about privacy, and particularly not about the data kept by government or corporations.

A large majority of these digital natives pay for some type of online subscription service, including a significant minority who pay for some type of news. Yet, in the qualitative discussions we had with them, many Millennials expressed a belief that they shouldn’t have to pay for news at all. As a key ingredient for democracy, some said, it should be free and accessible as a civic right.

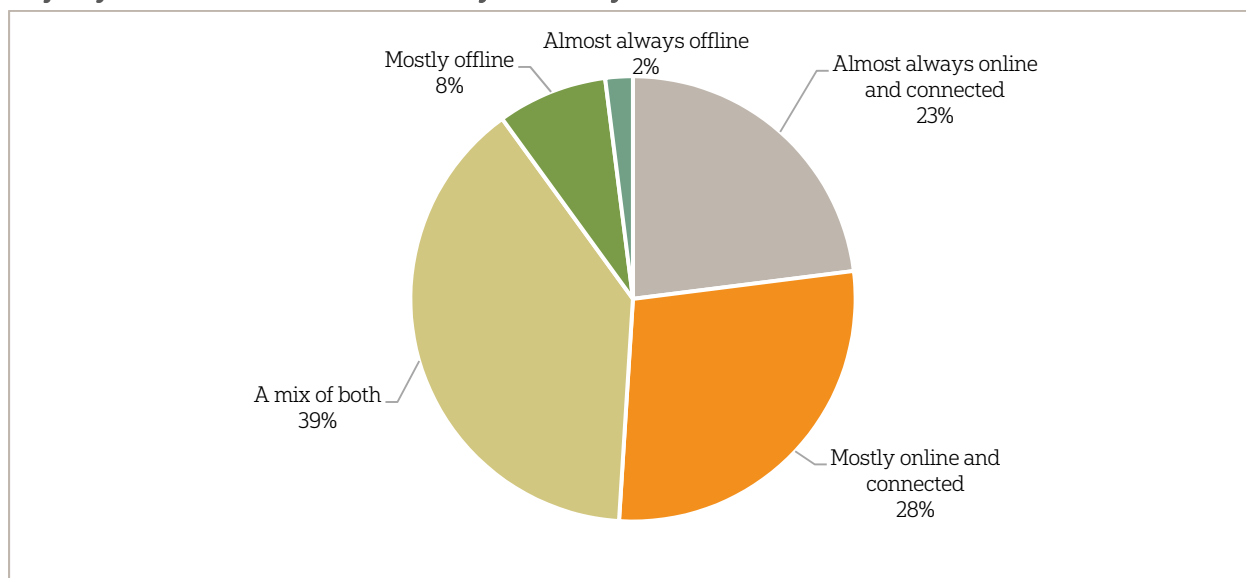
A MAJORITY OF MILLENNIALS FEEL CONNECTED MOST OF THE TIME, BUT NOT ALWAYS ENTHUSIASTICALLY

While they have the capacity to be online all the time, many Millennials are not.

All told, 51 percent say they are mostly or almost always online and connected. And in the qualitative interviews, we heard a good deal about the desire to control that connectivity.

A smaller but still significant number, 39 percent, say their lives are a mix of online and offline. Just 10 percent are almost always or always offline. Millennials in the qualitative interviews often acknowledged their high levels of connectivity but expressed concern and even some active efforts to scale back.

Brenna, age 25 from Chicago, noted that, “I think that it’s life-consuming, because when I travel abroad I like not having it. And I like turning off my data, leaving my phone, not even being on Twitter because it’s kind of refreshing not to have all of this information thrown at you.”

Majority of Millennials are almost always or mostly online and connected

Question: How much of the time do you spend [online and connected, and how much do you spend offline]?

MANY MILLENNIALS PAY FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS, BUT MORE OFTEN IT IS FOR ENTERTAINMENT THAN INFORMATION AND NEWS

Contrary to the stereotype that digital natives believe everything on the web should be free, the great majority of this generation use subscription services of some kind. More often than not, they pay for these things themselves, but for some types of content, substantial portions also gain access through subscriptions paid for by others. Fewer, but still a sizable minority, have paid for news and information.

Overall, 93 percent of Millennials used some kind of subscription in the past year, and 87 percent personally paid for at least one service. And 40 percent paid for at least one news-specific service, app, or digital subscription themselves.

The most popular types of paid content accessed by Millennials are movies and television. Fifty-five percent say they personally have paid to download, rent, or stream movies or television shows on iTunes, Netflix, or other paid services in the past year. An additional 23 percent have these services paid for by others, one of the higher rates of using someone else's subscription.

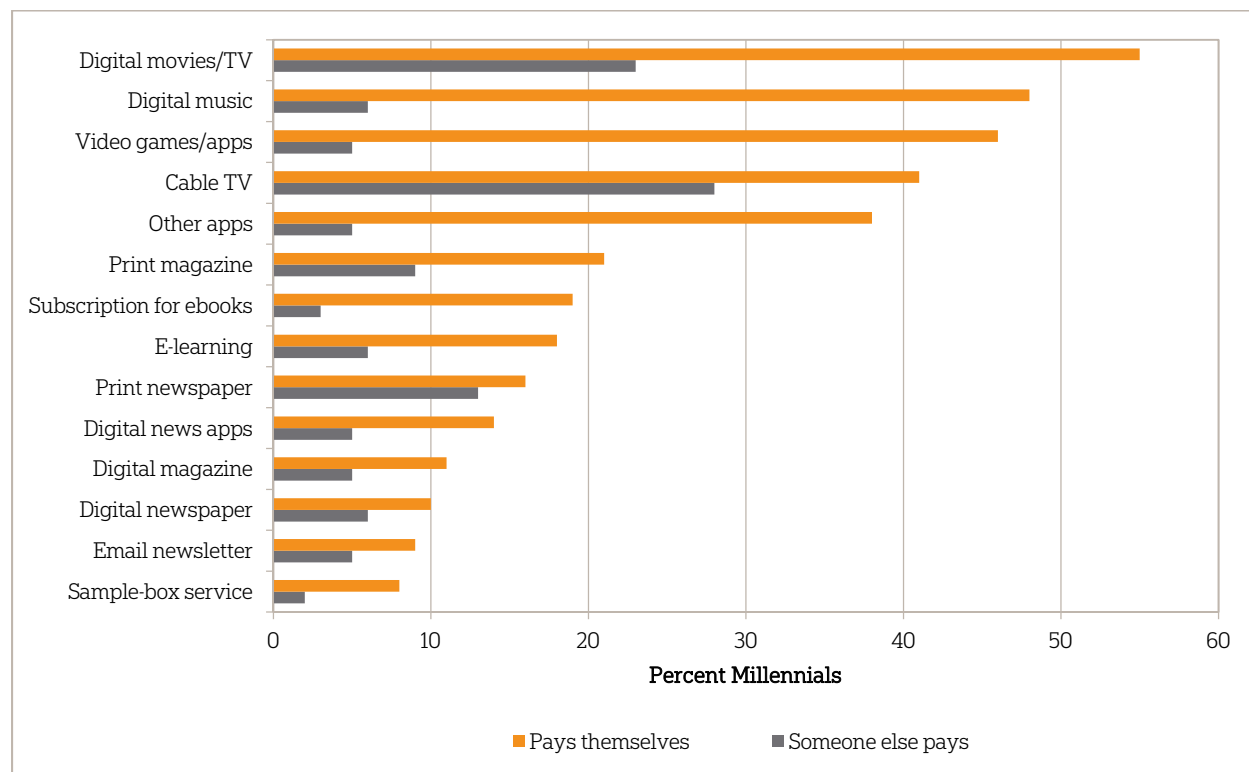
And 20 percent of Millennials say they *do not* watch movies or TV online using a subscription service.

Slightly behind movies and TV comes music, where 48 percent say they have paid to download or stream it on iTunes, Spotify, or other music platforms. Unlike with video, only 6 percent say someone else pays for them to access these services. And roughly 4 in 10 (39 percent) report not using any type of paid music downloading or streaming service in the past year.

Fewer than half (46 percent) have paid by any means for video games or video game apps.

Just 19 percent say they have paid in the last year for a subscription service for eBooks or audiobooks such as Kindle Unlimited or Audible, about the same number (18 percent) who say they paid for an e-learning service or online course.

A large majority of Millennials use paid services for movies, television, and music, and often pay for it themselves



Question: Please select any of the following paid products or services that you have regularly used in the past year. For each one, please check whether you pay for the product or service yourself, someone else pays for it, or both.

When it comes to paying for the news, 40 percent of Millennials report paying for at least one subscription themselves, including a digital news app (14 percent), a digital magazine (11 percent), a digital subscription to a newspaper (10 percent), or a paid email newsletter (9 percent). When subscriptions used but paid for by others are added, that number rises to 53 percent who have used some type of paid subscription for news in the last year.

Interestingly, this digital generation is more likely to have paid for non-digital versions of these products. For instance, 21 percent say they have paid in the last year for a subscription to a print magazine, and 16 percent for a print newspaper, rates that are higher than for digital versions of the same products.

News publishers also may have some work to do in the digital space when it comes to subscriptions. In the qualitative interviews, we heard the notion that, because news is important for democracy, people feel they should not have to pay for it. It should be more of a civic right because it is a civic good.

"I don't think you should pay for news," said Eric, age 22 in Chicago. "That's something everybody should be informed in. Like, you're going to charge me for information that's going on around the world?"

Or Sam, age 19 from San Francisco, who said in his interview, "I really wouldn't pay for any type of news because as a citizen it's my right to know the news."

Just 8 percent pay for a personalized shopping service such as Birchbox or Goodebox, where products are selected based on your profile.

Most Millennials pay for all their digital subscription services themselves, though some have higher rates of someone else footing the bill than others. For example, just 1 in 10 who use a subscription for eBooks or audio books have someone else paying for that subscription, while more than 4 in 10 who use a print newspaper say they use someone else's subscription.

When it comes to offline services other than print, 41 percent of Millennials still subscribe to cable TV, and 28 percent say they use cable TV paid by someone else. Twenty-seven percent say they do not access any pay cable television.

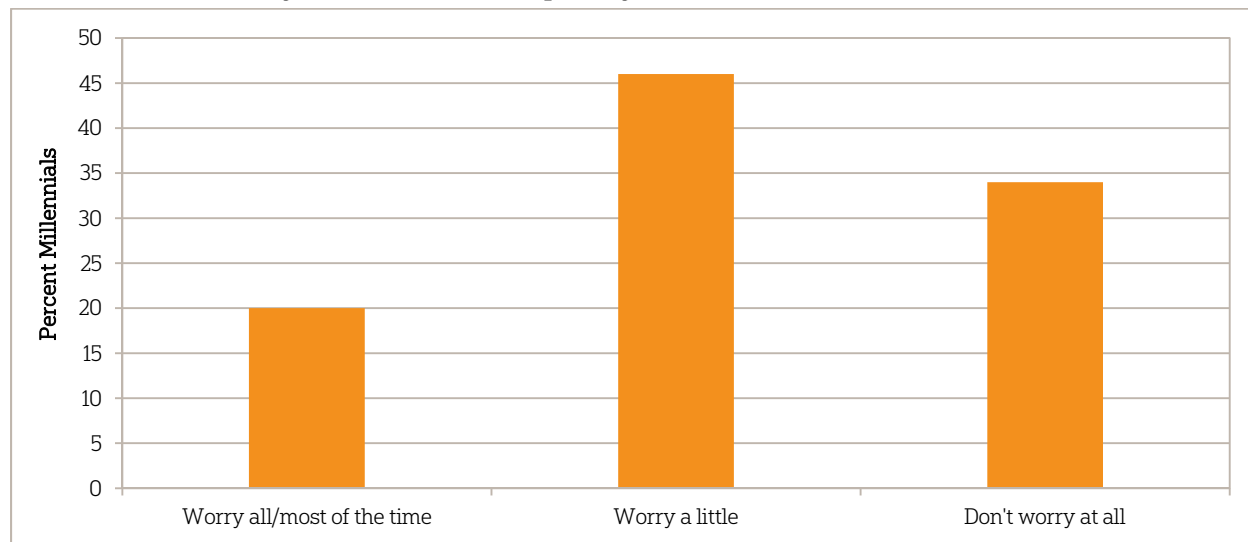
"It's just too easy to get things for free online." – Adriana, age 23, San Francisco

Being a more active news seeker, meanwhile, is associated with more willingness to pay for some types of news. The 39 percent of Millennials who identified themselves as more likely to actively seek out news are roughly twice as likely as those who say they mostly bump into it to personally pay for digital news apps (21 percent vs. 10 percent) and print newspapers (21 percent vs. 11 percent).

THOSE WHO WORRY ABOUT PRIVACY ARE MOSTLY WORRIED ABOUT IDENTITY THEFT

For all of their connectivity, however, Millennials are not particularly worried about privacy. Just 2 in 10 say they worry a good deal or all of the time about their information being available online. The most common response, at 46 percent, is worrying only a little. And 34 percent do not worry at all.

Millennials are not very worried about their privacy online



Question: How much do you worry, if at all, about information about you being available online?

Of those who do worry, what concerns them? In general, it is not government spying, or even that big corporations will know too much about them.

The biggest concern, among those worried about privacy, is that someone will steal their identity or financial information (58 percent), which represents 38 percent when those who are not worried are included. That is followed by 46 percent who worry that people they don't know very well will learn too much about their personal lives (or 30 percent when those not worried at all are included).

Even among the 66 percent who worry about privacy, less than half are concerned that big companies will know too much or sell their information (45 percent). That means that of all Millennials surveyed, only 30 percent are worried about corporations knowing too much about their lives.

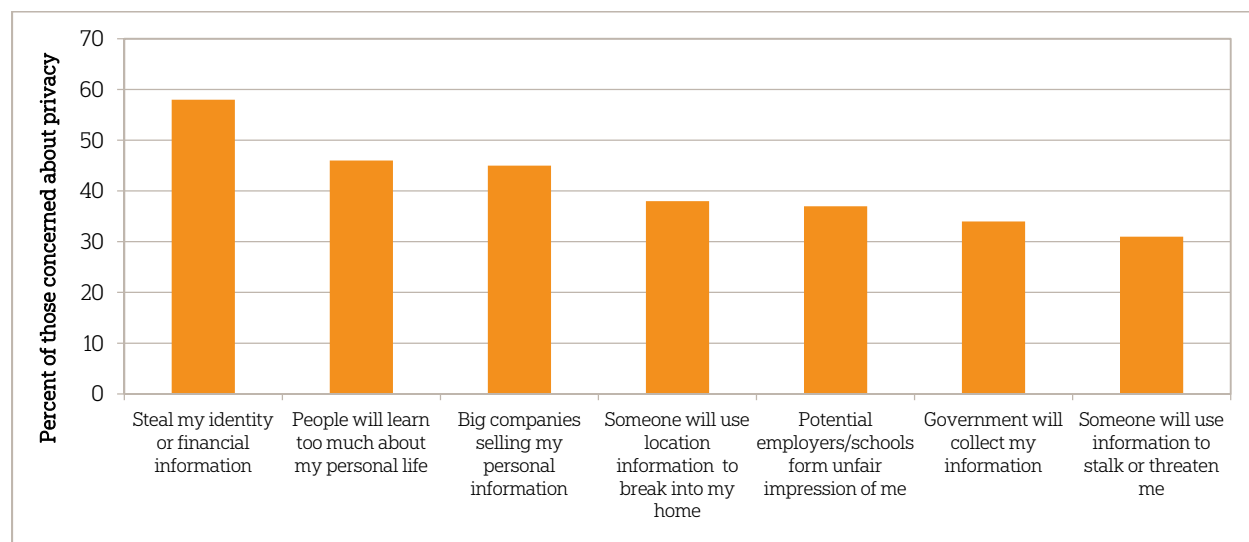
Almost 4 in 10 who have privacy concerns worry about potential employers or schools forming an unfair impression of them based on their online footprint, though this rate was higher among those who do share personal information or content on Facebook or Twitter than among those who do not.

About 4 in 10 Millennials also express concern that someone will use information about their location to break into their home when they are not there (38 percent).

And only about a third of those with any privacy concerns at all are worried about the government collecting information about them (34 percent). When those who don't worry about their privacy online are included, the number of adults under age 35 worried about government surveillance of their digital lives falls to 22 percent.

Lowest on the list, 31 percent of those with privacy concerns say they worry someone will use it to stalk or threaten them.

Millennials who worry about privacy are most concerned that someone will steal their identity or financial information



Question: What is it you are worried about? Please select all that apply.

Those who say they are worried either a good deal or all of the time are more likely to express concern about each of these potential invasions than are those who worry only a little, with one exception. Those worried only a little are about as likely as those who worried a lot that employers or schools will form an unfair impression of them.

The study also found evidence contradicting the idea that load times are a critical factor in influencing the behavior of this digital native generation. Only a minority of Millennials say they gave up on web content because it didn't load fast enough. Just 9 percent say they do so frequently. Another 25 percent say it happens fairly often. The majority (65 percent) say it happens not that often or almost never.

V. HOW MILLENNIALS USE AND CONTROL SOCIAL MEDIA

By taking a deep look into the information habits of Millennials, the study also sheds more detailed light on how Millennials are using social media.

Social networks are an extraordinarily important part of Millennials' digital lives, in part because social networks have become much more than a way to connect about personal matters.

At the same time, we heard in various ways that people increasingly want to take more control over social media, manage their time there, and improve the quality of what they see. Various people expressed a sense of frustration, particularly with Facebook, for having too much information, taking up too much of their time, and containing too much content that wasn't trustworthy or worthwhile.

"I don't like to go on Facebook anymore, but, I mean, I still do it," said Sam, age 19 in San Francisco.

MILLENNIALS USE A VARIETY OF SOCIAL NETWORKS FOR NEWS AND INFORMATION, ESPECIALLY FACEBOOK

The survey measured the use of seven different social networks as pathways to news and information. That analysis provides a landscape view of social media and news. One striking finding is that every one of these social networks, to greater or lesser degrees, are now news platforms.

Fully 88 percent of those surveyed get news from Facebook at least occasionally, 83 percent from YouTube, and 50 percent from Instagram.

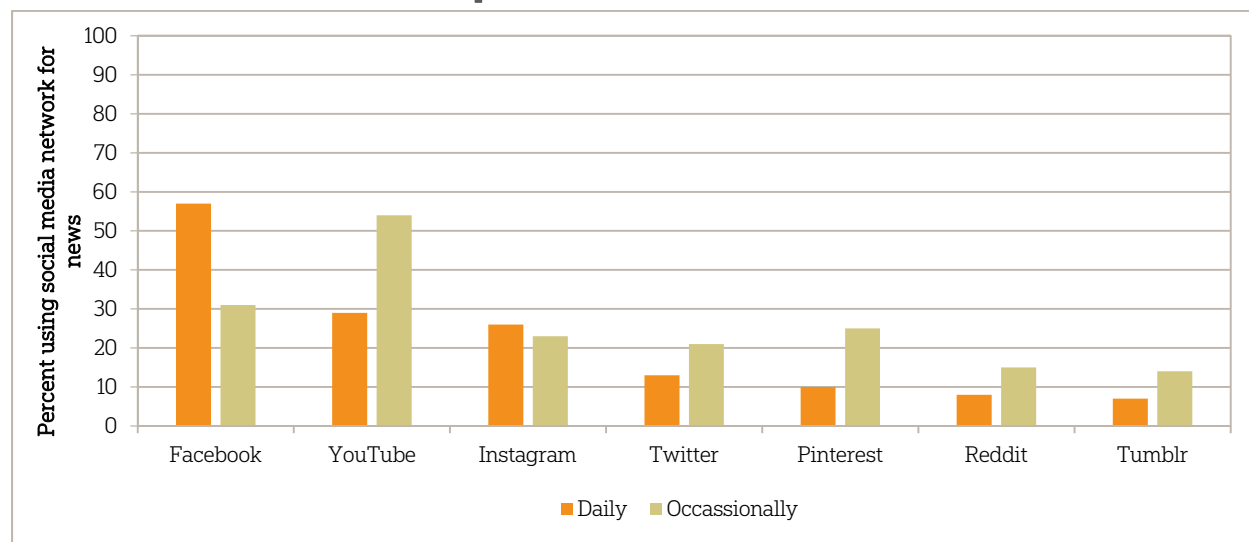
Sizable minorities of Millennials also report getting news from Pinterest (36 percent), Twitter (33 percent), Reddit (23 percent), and Tumblr (21 percent). And while these numbers are smaller, they represent quite large percentages of those who use these social media platforms at all.

For all that, the omnipresence of Facebook stands out. Fully 57 percent of Millennials who get news from Facebook do so at least once a day (including 44 percent who say at least several times a day).

That is roughly double the number using YouTube (29 percent) or Instagram (26 percent) on a daily basis to get news and information, the next most popular social networks for doing so.

Far fewer report getting news on a daily basis from Twitter (13 percent), Pinterest (10 percent), Reddit (8 percent), or Tumblr (7 percent).

People who describe themselves as active news and information seekers are more likely to use certain social networks for news. In particular, these more active news seekers are more likely to use Reddit (13 percent vs. 4 percent) and somewhat more likely to use YouTube (33 percent vs. 26 percent) at least once a day than those who say they mostly bump into news.

Facebook dominates as a social media platform for news and information

Question: How often, if at all, do you get news and information from each of the following?

Although Facebook is popular among all adults under age 35, younger Millennials are even more likely to use a mix of social networks for news than older members of this generation. The average 18-to-21-year-old uses 3.7 social networks out of seven platforms asked about in the survey. For the average older Millennial age 30-34, that decreases to 2.9.

Stevie, age 19 from Oakland, has deleted his Facebook entirely in favor of other platforms, though he acknowledges that he may be missing out on some of his social network as a result. “I shouldn’t have [deleted it] because a lot of older people still use it; college students, and all my college friends still have it, but I deleted it because I felt like I had too many things. I stopped using it because there are other things to use.”

WHILE SOCIAL NETWORKS MAY BE A PLACE THAT PEOPLE BUMP INTO NEWS, MANY MILLENNIALS ENGAGE MORE ACTIVELY WITH THE NEWS ONCE THERE

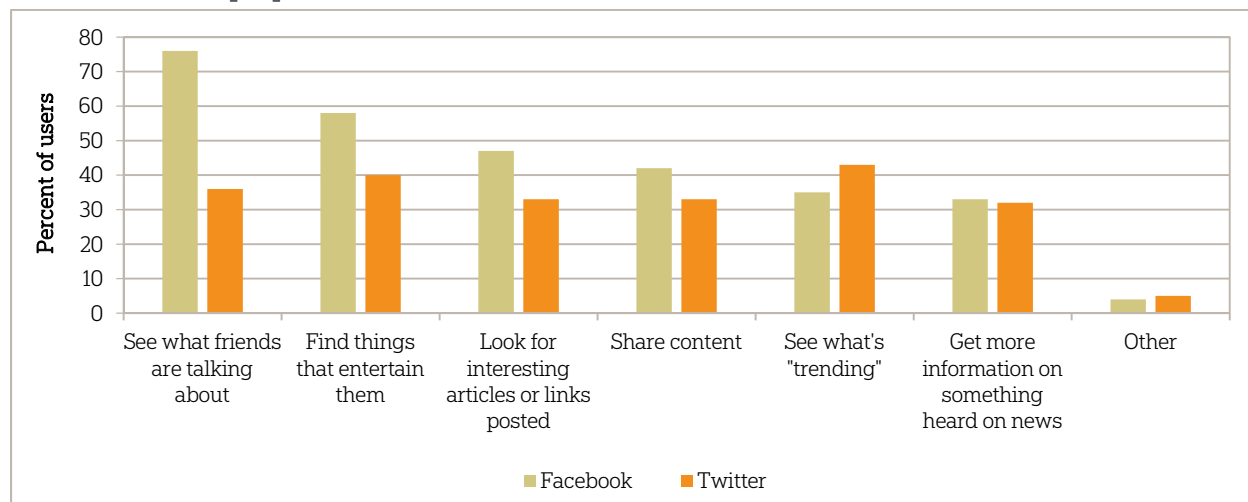
The survey asked the 91 percent of Millennials who report using Facebook for any reason about their behavior there. Seven in 10 click on and regularly read or watch news stories or headlines posted by other people. They also participate in news in ways that are not entirely possible in more traditional platforms. Six in 10, for instance, say they regularly “like” a posted news story, headline, or link. Nearly half, 42 percent, say they regularly post or share news content to Facebook themselves, and 34 percent say they regularly comment on news stories, headlines, or links. Only 11 percent of Facebook users say they do not do any of these things.

The data also suggest that Facebook may be increasing news awareness and consumption in ways that even its users do not anticipate or intend. A good deal of this news consumption is unexpected, or serendipitous. For instance, while 7 in 10 regularly click on news stories on Facebook, less than half (47 percent) of Millennials using Facebook say that hunting for interesting articles is one of the main reasons they use the platform.

The more common motivations for turning to Facebook, these users say, are social. Fully 76 percent of these Facebook Millennials cite seeing what their friends are talking about and what’s happening in

their friends' lives, as a main reason they turn to Facebook. A clear majority (58 percent) cite using Facebook to find things that entertain them, such as funny lists, articles, or videos.

The main reasons people turn to Facebook vs. Twitter



Questions: Which of these, if any, are the main reasons that you use Facebook? Which of these, if any, are the main reasons that you use Twitter?

Along with getting news, fewer than half cite sharing content (42 percent), or seeing what's trending and what people are talking about on social media (35 percent) as a main motivation for turning to Facebook. Even lower percentages of this generation say they look to Facebook as a way of learning more about things, or a means to getting more information on something they heard about either on social media or in the news (33 percent).

Twitter, by contrast, is a different kind of platform. While it is a significantly less popular social network overall than Facebook, it is more popular among this group of younger Millennials than it is among adults overall. In general, recent surveys of adults of all ages show that 23 percent have a Twitter account.⁸ Among Millennials, however, fully 37 percent say they use Twitter.

The reasons they use Twitter are related but slightly different than the reasons they turn to Facebook. Twitter is a place to learn about what people in general are talking about, not just the lives of people they know. For instance, the number one reason these Twitter users say they use the social platform is to see what's "trending" and what people are talking about (43 percent). The number two reason is to find things that entertain them, such as funny lists, articles, or videos (40 percent). About half as many Twitter users as Facebook users (36 percent vs. 76 for Facebook)

In Millennials' Words: Why do you prefer Facebook/Twitter?

"My reasoning for using Facebook is to communicate with people and be able to find more friends and to stay in contact with [my] friends."
– Francis, age 20, Chicago

"I like Twitter. I use it like a foundation. You can post photos, you can post articles. You can also post just thoughts, and it's fast paced so it's not like a Facebook wall. [On Facebook,] everything gathers and stays there. It's like still water. Twitter is constantly moving, changing every hour or so."
– Marwa, age 25, Chicago

⁸ <http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheets/social-networking-fact-sheet/>

say a main reason they use Twitter is to see what's happening in their friends' lives and what they're talking about.

News is not the primary reason that Millennials use Twitter. About one-third say they go to Twitter mainly to look for interesting articles or links their followed friends or organizations post, to share their own content, or to get more information on something they heard either on social media or in the news.

But as with Facebook, the reasons people look at Twitter and the ways they say they actually use it are also different. When asked about action rather than motivation, news becomes far more important.

About half (49 percent) of these Twitter-using Millennials say they regularly read or watch news stories or headlines posted there, and one-third regularly re-tweet news stories, headlines, or links posted by others on Twitter. Fewer regularly compose their own tweets about something news related (26 percent) or tweet news stories, headlines, or links from other websites (23 percent). Just 22 percent of those who use Twitter say they do not use it for any of these news engagement activities.

MILLENNIALS SAY SOCIAL MEDIA EXPOSES THEM TO DIFFERENT OPINIONS AND VIEWS

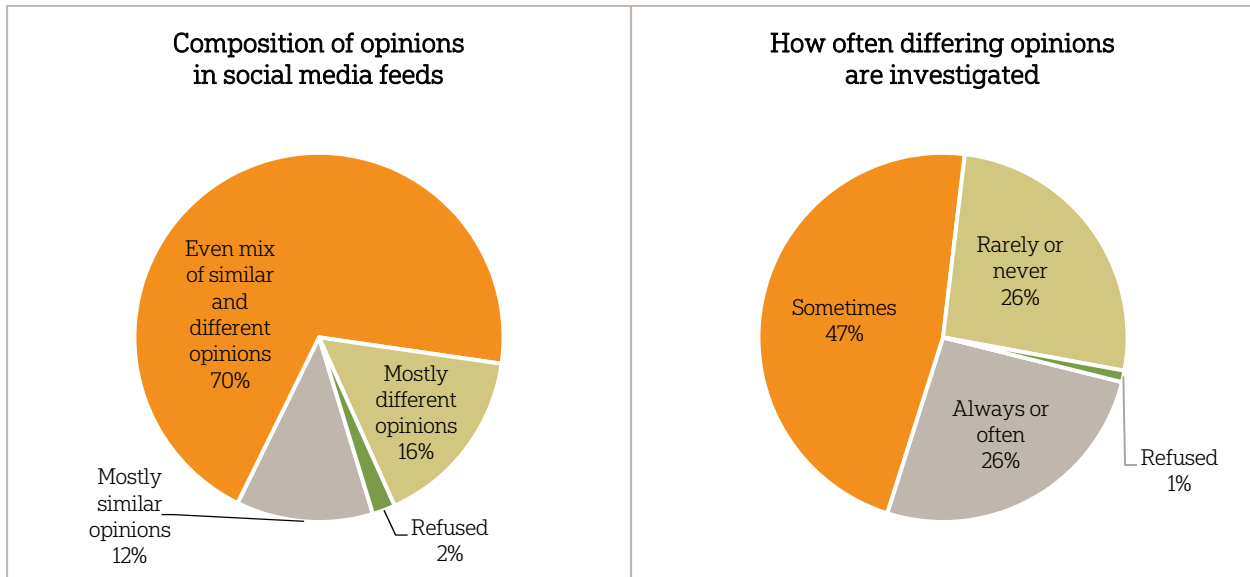
One concept that some critics have wondered about in the age of almost complete consumer choice is whether people are insulated from opinions and ideas that are different than their own. This has been called the "filter bubble," among other names, and there is a question about whether younger adults, who grew up with these choices rather than the agenda-setting of more traditional media are more prone to this risk.

In our earlier study, the Personal News Cycle, we found that the filter bubble was probably overstated when considered broadly. Most Americans did not make their choices about where to learn about most news topics based on ideology. The study found that Americans are discriminating consumers of news whose news habits vary depending on the topic. That study challenged the notion that with limitless choices people follow only a few subjects in which they are interested and only from sources with which they agree.

For this deeper look at people under age 35, we found Millennials perceive themselves to be exposed to a variety of opinions and say they are willing to investigate those opinions.

In all, 70 percent of Millennials say that their social media feeds are composed of a relatively even mix of similar and different opinions to their own. Just 12 percent say the opinions they see in social media are mostly similar to their own. A slightly larger number, 16 percent, say, interestingly, that the opinions and viewpoints they see are mostly different than their own.

Millennials encounter a wide mix of opinions in social media



Questions: Choose the statement that best describes you, even if it is not exactly right. Would you say that the opinions you see in your social media feeds are mostly similar to my own, an even mix of similar and different to my own, or mostly different than my own? How often, if at all, would you say that you click on or investigate opinions you see in your social media feeds that are different than your own?

Those who describe themselves as *less active* seekers of news are even more likely to say they encounter diverse opinions and viewpoints in social media. Fully 73 percent of those Millennials who say they mostly bump into news and information throughout their day say the opinions in their feeds are an even mix of viewpoints, compared with 65 percent of those who call themselves active news seekers. Bumping into news, in other words, may widen the perspectives one is exposed to, not narrow them.

Exposure is one thing. Clicking on those opinions you disagree with is another. To what extent do these younger Millennials then take that next step and read the things that don't reflect their own viewpoints?

Of those who say they see either a mix or mostly dissimilar opinions to their own in their social media feeds, 26 percent say they always or often investigate these different opinions. About half, 47 percent say they do sometimes. Thus nearly three-quarters of these Millennials (73 percent) say they investigate opinions different than their own in social media at least some of the time.

Only a minority, 26 percent, say they rarely or never click on or investigate opinions in their social media feeds that are different from their own.

In other words, the study suggests a wide exposure to different points of view in social media, and a sizable consciousness of taking the next step and investigating those views.

We heard the same awareness in our qualitative interviews, where we were able to press people to see if these responses are simply answers to a survey or are evident in the way people voluntarily describe their behavior.

“[Social media] creates such good dialogue because there are so many places you can get ideas,” said Lauren, age 23 in Chicago. “You don’t know where your friend or your parent is getting their news from. So you can openly have a dialogue, and you have just totally different views on the same event. I think, overall, it’s so cool that it opens up that dialogue.”

MILLENNIALS REPORT CHANGING THEIR SOCIAL MEDIA BEHAVIOR OVER TIME

Another trend about the lives of Millennials in social media is that their behavior there has changed over time. Whether this is because they have gotten older, their attitude toward social networks has changed, or they think social media itself has changed is harder to know. We heard in our qualitative interviews examples of all three of those factors.

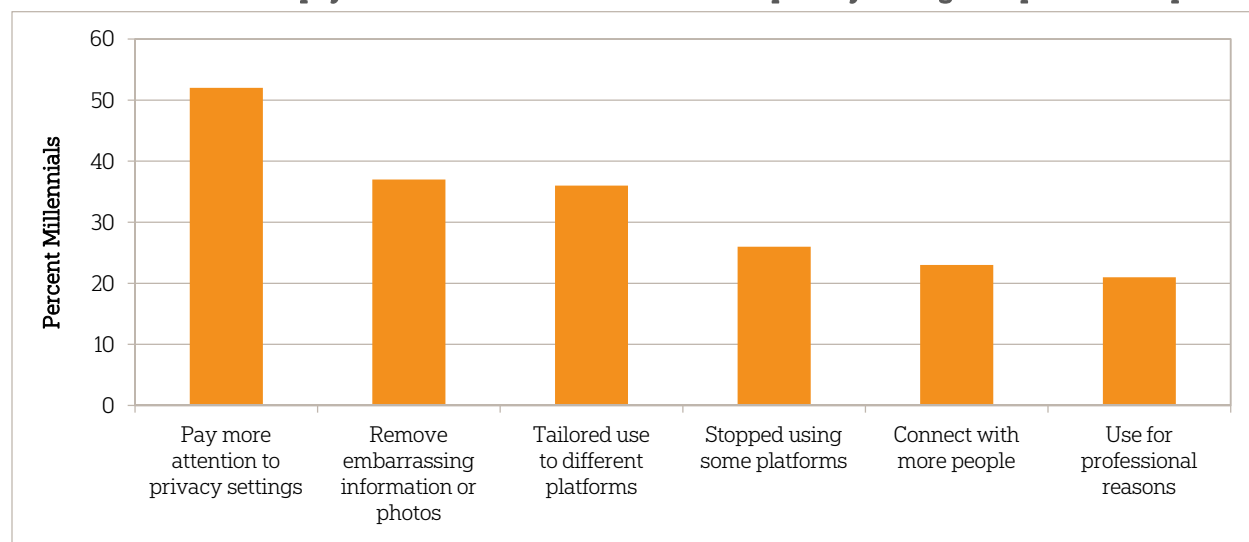
Whatever the reason, fully 86 percent say they have changed how they use social media in some way compared to the past.

While in general this generation is not highly concerned about privacy (as noted above), the most frequently cited change in social media behavior is paying more attention to and actively controlling their privacy settings than they once did. This was true of over half (52 percent) of all respondents. That was the only change cited by a majority.

The second-biggest change had to do with removing content. Fully 37 percent say they are now more likely to remove information or photos of themselves that are embarrassing or immature.

And those who share content on Facebook or Twitter are more likely than those who do not share content to monitor their privacy settings (60 percent vs. 46 percent) as well as remove information or photos that could be embarrassing (47 percent vs. 30 percent).

Over half of Millennials pay more attention to and control their privacy settings compared to the past



Question: In which of the following ways, if any, has your use of social media networks changed over time? Please select all that apply.

The composition of some Millennials' networks is also changing. Thirty-six percent say they have tailored the way they use social media, with different platforms having different purposes.

We heard this often in our qualitative interviews as well. Elsee, age 23 from Chicago, notes that she'll "get up and I always have a routine of what I check out on social media. It's always Instagram first, because it's nice pictures, then I'll check out Facebook because, okay, this is what my friends are doing, and then I'll go to Twitter and I'll be like, okay, what's the news."

There is also some but not overwhelming evidence of what might be called social fatigue. In all, 26 percent of Millennials say they have stopped using some of their social networks altogether.

At the same time, however, another notion about the web – that it widens one's network of people in an ever-expanding manner, is also not borne out in the data. In all, only about 1 in 5 Millennials say they now connect with a broader range of people (23 percent) than they once did. Similarly, only about 1 in 5 says they use social networks for professional reasons more frequently (21 percent) than they used to.

VI. DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION

One risk of trying to analyze a generation is that it may be an arbitrary demarcation. When does a generation begin or end?

The research shows that across different cohorts within the Millennial generation there is a great deal of diversity in attitudes, experiences, and behaviors. These differences cut across age, gender, ethnicity, partisanship, income, education, and other socioeconomic variables.

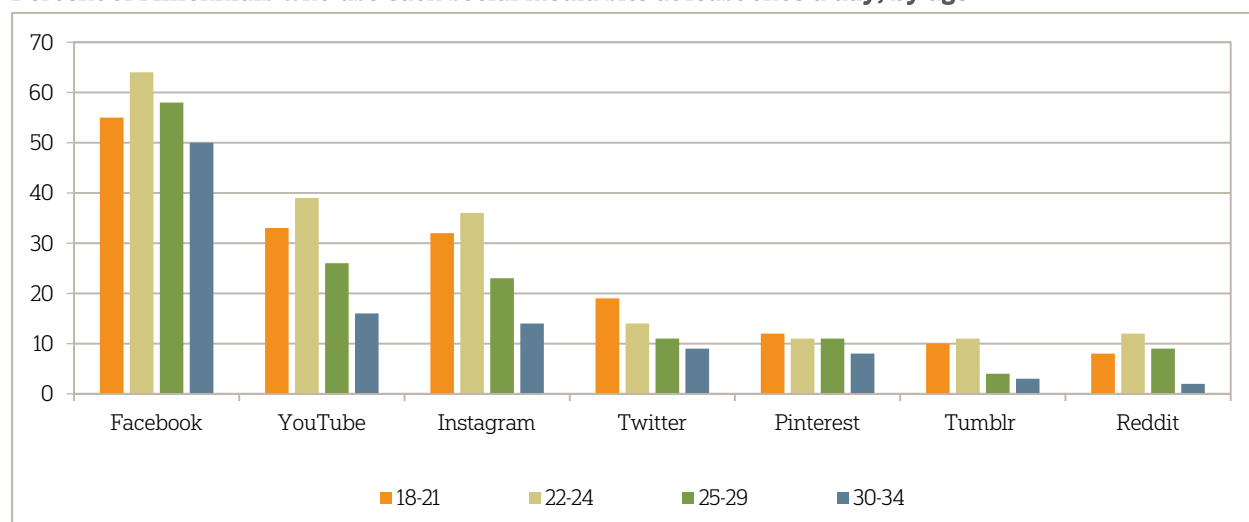
These differences are potentially significant. As Millennials age and as demographics shift, these could reveal how news consumption, particularly online, will change in the future. We will touch on a few of them here, but plan to explore these variations more fully in future reports.

EVEN WITHIN THE MILLENNIAL GENERATION THERE ARE DIFFERENCES BY AGE

The data suggest a sizable difference between Millennials over age 30 and those under age 25, even those out of college.

This is particularly true when it comes to social media. Younger Millennials are more connected to social media, use it more frequently, and use a greater variety of social networks.

It is also true of news. Younger Millennials use social media sites for news and information more frequently than older Millennials, and this holds true across a variety of social media platforms. For instance, those age 18 to 21 are more likely than those age 30 to 34 to say they get news or information at least once a day from Twitter (19 percent vs. 9 percent), Reddit (8 percent vs. 2 percent), Tumblr (10 percent vs. 3 percent), and Instagram (32 percent vs. 14 percent).

Percent of Millennials who use each social media site at least once a day, by age

Question: How often, if at all, do you get news and information from each of the following?

Motivations for using social media also vary somewhat by age. Among Facebook users, 52 percent of those age 22-24 years old look for interesting articles or links posted by their friends. That is 11 percentage points higher than the 41 percent of those age 30-34 years old. For these older Millennials, Facebook appears to be more about social interaction than about connecting with the world around them.

There are other differences by age that touch on web activity in general. Millennials over age 30, for instance, are far more likely to describe themselves as active seekers of news than people who mainly bump into it, compared to younger Millennials under age 25. For those age 30-34, by contrast, active seeking versus more passive is evenly split (49 percent active vs. 50 percent more passive). Among those under age 25, only a third describe themselves as active seekers, while two-thirds say the news finds them. How one finds news, the data suggest, may be partly a function of age and experience rather than whether one is a digital native. The evidence probably leans against the idea that these younger Millennials might move away from social media to get news as they age, however. This is the group that grew up with social media for all of their adult lives. Their use of it, if anything, has grown with time, and become more complex.

One area where age made little difference is in the motivations for getting news in general. Whether people are college age or in their 30s, their reasons for getting news were strikingly similar and balanced across the three main categories – civic, social, and practical.

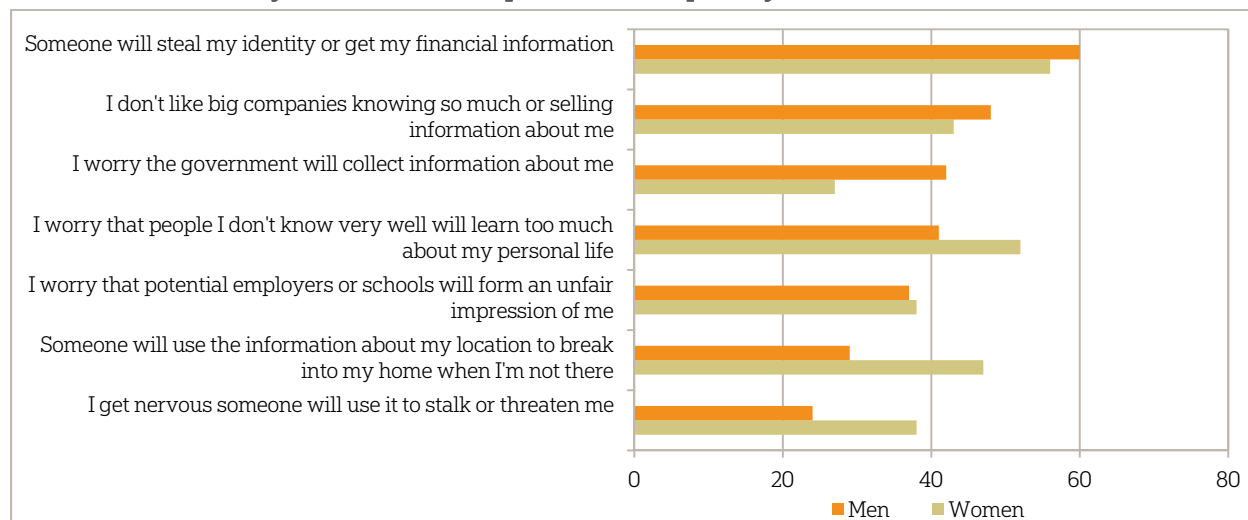
MEN AND WOMEN HAVE DIFFERENT ONLINE PRIVACY CONCERNS, USE DIFFERENT SOCIAL MEDIA SITES, AND FOLLOW DIFFERENT TOPICS

In addition to age, there are gender differences in the online and social media behavior of Millennials. Many of these are related to online privacy, social media use, and the types of information and news followed online. Women and men have different privacy concerns about the web. Women, for instance, are significantly more likely than men to worry someone will use their location information to break into their home (47 percent vs. 29 percent), and to use their information to stalk or threaten them (38 percent vs. 24 percent).

Women are also more likely than men to worry that people they don't know very well will learn too much about their personal lives (52 percent vs. 41 percent).

On the other hand, men are significantly more likely than women to worry that the government will collect information about them (42 percent vs. 27 percent).

Men and women worry about different aspects of online privacy



Question: What is it you are worried about? Please select all that apply.

There are also some gender differences in the use of social media for news. Men are more likely than women to say they use Reddit (10 percent vs. 5 percent) and YouTube (35 percent vs. 21) at least once a day. In contrast, women are more likely than men to report using Pinterest (16 percent vs. 5 percent) and Instagram (36 percent vs. 17 percent) for news at least once a day.

With Facebook, women are more likely than men to see what's happening with friends (74 percent vs. 64 percent) and to tell people what is going on in their lives (48 percent vs. 29 percent).

Men and women have also adapted their social media use differently over time. Men are more likely than women to say they now connect with a broader range of people (26 percent vs. 19 percent), while women are more likely than men to say they now pay more attention to privacy (57 percent vs. 47 percent). Fully 44 percent of women say they are now more likely to remove information or photos that are embarrassing compared with 31 percent of men.

Women and men also follow different topics and search for different information online.

Women, for instance, are more likely than men to follow news about celebrities (47 percent vs. 23 percent), style and fashion (44 percent vs. 10 percent), and health and fitness (49 percent vs. 32 percent). More women than men follow how-to information (51 percent vs. 36 percent), and traffic and weather information (57 percent vs. 46 percent). Women are also more likely than men to follow news about health care (45 percent vs. 27 percent), schools and education (43 percent vs. 24 percent), and social issues (44 percent vs. 31 percent).

There are a few topics about which men are more interested. One of them is sports (58 percent of men say they regularly follow it vs. 39 percent of women), though that difference may be smaller than some might expect. But this is not the only subject where men expressed more interest. They also were more likely to say they regularly follow national politics (48 percent vs. 38 percent) and science (52 percent vs. 32 percent).

On many more elements of digital life, what is striking is how similar men and women are. There are few differences in what activities men and women do online, or how often.

RACIAL DIFFERENCES AMONG MILLENNIALS IN ONLINE ACTIVITIES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The digital and social media behavior of Millennials also differs somewhat by ethnicity.

These differences, however, have little to do with device ownership. Across all ethnic groups, more than 90 percent of Millennials surveyed own a smartphone and roughly half own tablets.

The differences, instead, relate to behavior online. Millennial Hispanics, for instance, are less likely than others to engage in various online activities. Fewer report being online to keep up with friends (63 percent Hispanic vs. 71 percent all Millennials), keep up with news (53 percent vs. 64 percent), or pursue hobbies (50 percent vs. 65 percent). Hispanic Millennials are also less likely to play games online (37 percent vs. 45 percent), stream video (53 percent vs. 68 percent), and check weather or traffic (48 percent vs. 57 percent).

African American Millennials, by contrast, differ from Millennials overall on only one of these activity categories. They are less likely to be online to keep up with friends (59 percent vs. 71 percent).

There are differences in social media use, as well, correlated to race and ethnicity. Hispanics and African Americans, to begin with, are more likely to use certain social media sites than the population overall, and whites in particular. Hispanic and African American Millennials, for instance, are more likely to turn to YouTube for news every day (38 percent Hispanics and 33 percent for African American) than are white Millennials (20 percent). Hispanic and African American young adults also look to Instagram for news every day more so than white Millennials (45 percent of African Americans, 30 percent Hispanics, and 19 percent whites).

VII. LOOKING AHEAD

In our interviews, we also asked this generation what they see coming, and how they would like the media to change.

One theme we heard was a desire that the crowded media marketplace would calm down, and that there would be less fear mongering – which interestingly is a theme scholars have identified in the digital landscape. “I’d like if the media in the next five years is actually stripped down and is more factual as opposed to sensationalized,” said Marwa, age 25 in Chicago. “I feel like the news creates so much drama for us, it creates so much fear instead of just saying, ‘okay, this is what happened.’”

We heard this in other cities as well. “[O]ne thing that I want to see change is that news is less sensationalist, and don’t use big buzzwords or click bait just to get a message out there that isn’t necessarily true or relevant,” said Connor, a sophomore at the University of Mary Washington.

“I want the news to find a balance. That’s my most important thing. I don’t want to turn on the news and just see nothing but negativity and you know, nothing but sadness,” said Sam, age 19 in San Francisco. “Like I found out the Richmond death rate or homicide rate has been the lowest in many years. I found that out from social media. I didn’t find that out from the news.”

For Sam, the professional news media seems to be straining for his attention so much he doubts that they would have even reported something that wasn’t negative or alarming. “The news wouldn’t tell you anything like that. The news would be quick to tell you, ‘okay, the homicide rate is up, that it’s the highest in five years.’”

Another theme we heard is a desire for the news media to be more of an arbiter of truthfulness and not just a carrier of potentially polarizing rhetoric or alarming allegations.

Marilu, age 29 from Chicago, was concerned not only with what some media outlets cover, but with what they ignore. “Some news stations need to grow up. And I say this because, when Obama made the announcement [about immigration], some news stations didn’t report it or they didn’t televise it. I feel like whether they agree with something or not, no matter what their political agenda is, this was the news [and they should cover it].”

No matter the type of media, Devon in San Francisco is waiting for journalists of his generation to come to the fore and speak in ways that are more relevant to him. “Find a way to make it different points of view. Bring in more people with a different opinion, like maybe a different age group that could reach a different audience. [B]ring somebody else along so that they can maybe [speak] to our age group.”

VIII. ABOUT THE STUDY

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

This survey was conducted by the Media Insight Project, an initiative of the American Press Institute (API) and the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The survey was conducted from January 5 through February 2, 2015. The survey was funded by API. The API, NORC at the University of Chicago, and AP staff collaborated on all aspects of the study.

The study included multiple modes of data collection. The portion of the survey involving screening for age eligibility and recruitment was completed by telephone, while the main portion of the questionnaire was administered online. The telephone component included only cell telephone numbers (no landlines), and used both random-digit-dial (RDD) and age-targeted list sample from the 50 states and the District of Columbia. During recruitment efforts, a total of 6,635 adults provided age information, and 2,297 (35 percent) were deemed eligible because they fell between the ages of 18 and 34. Of those 2,297, a total of 1,759 respondents (77 percent) went on to complete the recruitment phase of the survey, which involved agreeing to receive an invitation for the web survey either by email or text message, and providing one’s email address or cell telephone number. Of the recruited participants, 1,045 (59 percent) completed the web survey. The final response rate was 14 percent, based on the American Association for Public Opinion Research Response Rate 3 method.

Respondents were offered one small monetary incentive for participating in the telephone portion of the survey, as compensation for telephone usage charges, and another small monetary incentive for

participating in the web portion of the survey. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish, depending on respondent preference. All telephone recruitments were completed by professional interviewers who were carefully trained on the specific survey for this study.

The RDD sample was provided by a third-party vendor, Marketing Systems Group. The age-targeted list sample was provided by a second vendor, Scientific Telephone Samples. The sample design aimed to ensure the sample representativeness of the population in a time- and cost-efficient manner. The sampling frame utilizes the standard cell telephone RDD frame, with a supplemental sample of cell telephone numbers targeting adults between the ages of 18 and 34. The targeted sample was pulled from a number of different commercial consumer databases and demographic data.

Sampling weights were appropriately adjusted to account for potential bias introduced by using the targeted sample. Sampling weights were calculated to adjust for sample design aspects (such as unequal probabilities of selection) and for nonresponse bias arising from differential response rates across various demographic groups and for noncoverage of the population without access to cell phones. Poststratification variables included age, sex, race/ethnicity, region, and education. The weighted data, which thus reflect the U.S. population of 18- to 34-year-old adults, were used for all analyses. The overall margin of error was +/- 3.8 percentage points, including the design effect resulting from the complex sample design.

All analyses were conducted using STATA (version 13), which allows for adjustment of standard errors for complex sample designs. All differences reported between subgroups of the U.S. population are at the 95 percent level of statistical significance, meaning that there is only a 5 percent (or less) probability that the observed differences could be attributed to chance variation in sampling. Additionally, bivariate differences between subgroups are only reported when they also remain robust in a multivariate model controlling for other demographic, political, and socioeconomic covariates. A comprehensive listing of all study questions, complete with tabulations of top-level results for each question, is available on the Media Insight Project's website: www.mediainsight.org.

QUALITATIVE GROUP INTERVIEWS

The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, in collaboration with the American Press Institute, conducted 10 semi-structured interviews with groups of Millennials, age 18-34. Three group interviews were conducted in Chicago, Illinois, on December 11, 2014; two were conducted in San Francisco, California, on January 7, 2015; two were conducted in Oakland, California, on January 7-8, 2015; and three were conducted in Fredericksburg, Virginia, on January 22, 2015.

Select participants in each of the locations also consented to completing follow-up activities. These activities included: 1) a self-reflection, interview, and essay exercise, and 2) a data diary. These exercises were intended to gather additional information about how these Millennials think about news and information, what news and information is important to them, and how they follow a news story of interest.

All participants received a monetary incentive for the discussion and an additional incentive to complete the follow-up activities. With the consent of the participants, all but one of the interviews were videotaped. There was a lead moderator for each group, and additional researchers asked probing questions. While there was a moderator guide to provide some direction, the interviews were meant to simulate a casual conversation to learn more about 1) how Millennials conceptualize news, 2)

what topics and types of news Millennials value and why, and 3) how Millennials engage with news – or not – and how has this changed for them over their lifetime.

Across all sites, 17 Millennials between the ages of 18-24, and six between the ages of 25-34, were interviewed. The Chicago interviews took place in a coffee shop downtown. The San Francisco interviews took place in a coffee shop in the Financial District. The Oakland interviews were conducted in a downtown coffee shop. The Fredericksburg interviews took place outside a dining hall in a university building.

Chicago

For the Chicago interviews, the AP-NORC Center commissioned a recruiter, FocusScope, to pre-recruit “friend groups” of Millennials, age 18-34. In each group, one participant was initially recruited by FocusScope, and he or she was asked to bring a friend or two to the discussion. The participants were recruited based on age, and to achieve a mix of demographics – income, education, race/ethnicity, and gender. All of the recruited respondents reported that they read, hear, or watch the news at least once a day.

Bay Area – San Francisco and Oakland

For the Bay Area interviews conducted in San Francisco and Oakland, AP-NORC commissioned Nichols Research to pre-recruit four friend groups. Again, recruiting was done based on age, a mix of demographic groups were recruited, and all recruited respondents reported that they read, hear, or watch the news at least once a day. In addition, there was an emphasis to find respondents in San Francisco who identified as being always online and connected, as well as extremely tech-savvy. For the Oakland groups, respondents who were not always online were targeted, and they were not recruited based on the tech-savvy criteria.

Fredericksburg, Virginia – University of Mary Washington

For interviews conducted in Fredericksburg, AP-NORC staff used an intercept approach where participants were recruited onsite at a student center at the University of Mary Washington. Groups of friends were approached and asked if they were available to participate in the interviews in the next half hour. Three groups of participants were recruited this way, two pairs and one group of three.

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ABOUT THE MEDIA INSIGHT PROJECT

The Media Insight Project is a collaboration of the American Press Institute and the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research with the objective of conducting high-quality, innovative research meant to inform the news industry and the public about various important issues facing journalism and the news business. The Media Insight Project brings together the expertise of both organizations and their respective partners, and involves collaborations among key staff at API, NORC at the University of Chicago, and The Associated Press.

About the American Press Institute

The American Press Institute conducts research and training, convenes thought leaders, and creates tools to help chart a path ahead for journalism in the 21st century. API is an educational non-advocacy 501(c)3 nonprofit organization affiliated with the Newspaper Association of America. It aims to help the news media, especially local publishers and newspaper media, advance in the digital age.

About the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research

The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research taps into the power of social science research and the highest-quality journalism to bring key information to people across the nation and throughout the world.

The Associated Press (AP) is the world's essential news organization, bringing fast, unbiased news to all media platforms and formats.

NORC at the University of Chicago is one of the oldest and most respected, independent research institutions in the world.

The two organizations have established the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals.

The founding principles of the AP-NORC Center include a mandate to carefully preserve and protect the scientific integrity and objectivity of NORC and the journalistic independence of AP. All work conducted by the Center conforms to the highest levels of scientific integrity to prevent any real or perceived bias in the research. All of the work of the Center is subject to review by its advisory committee to help ensure it meets these standards. The Center will publicize the results of all studies and make all datasets and study documentation available to scholars and the public.

PHOTO CREDITS

Cover Photo: This May 21, 2013 file photo shows an iPhone in Washington with Twitter, Facebook, and other apps. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci, File)