



© 2022 AP Photo/Jessica Hill

# Fatigue, Traditionalism, and Engagement: The News Habits and Attitudes of the Gen Z and Millennial Generations

August 2022

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THIS REPORT:

Eric Young, Public Affairs Manager, NORC

301-634-9536

Young-Eric@norc.org

[www.mediainsight.org](http://www.mediainsight.org)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>2</b>
Among the study findings:.....	4
<b>SECTION I: THE NEWS CONSUMPTION HABITS OF 16- TO 40-YEAR-OLDS.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Gen Z and Millennials use a variety of traditional news media to get news.....	6
Gen Z and Millennials use local and national news with similar frequency.....	7
Social media platforms prevail over traditional sources among Gen Z and Millennials.....	9
Lifestyle, hard news, and news you can use topics.....	12
Gen Z and Millennials continue to actively seek out news.....	15
Gen Z and Millennials pay for and donate to news services.....	15
Gen Z and Millennials share, text, talk about, email, or comment on news daily, but that behavior is declining.....	18
<b>SECTION II: NEWS AND DIGITAL FATIGUE.....</b>	<b>21</b>
Gen Z and Millennials feel digital fatigue and are concerned about misinformation in the media.....	21
Widespread concerns about misinformation.....	26
Concerns about the broader media environment among Millennials and Gen Z.....	29
<b>SECTION III: TRUST AND EXPECTATIONS.....</b>	<b>31</b>
Gen Z and Millennials hold traditional expectations of the press and have some positive views of the media.....	31
Gen Z and Millennials want more diverse coverage from the media.....	33
Gen Z and Millennials have nuanced expectations of the news media.....	34
<b>Study Methodology.....</b>	<b>39</b>
About the Media Insight Project.....	41
About the American Press Institute.....	41
About the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.....	41

## INTRODUCTION

A new in-depth survey of 16- to 40-year-olds shows that members of the Gen Z and Millennial generations are active consumers of news and information, with nearly a third of them willing to pay for it. But their relationship with the news is complex – their trust in the press is low, many are experiencing digital fatigue, and they are worried about misinformation in both traditional and social media.

News consumption among Americans ages 16 to 40 is high. Seventy-nine percent report getting news daily. Thirty-eight percent describe themselves as active seekers of news and information. And a third pay for news subscriptions. Millennials and Gen Z get news frequently from social media, but also use a wide range of sources – including traditional news outlets. They follow a variety of news topics every day, including so-called “hard news”.

Gen Z and Millennials have both traditional and novel views of what they want from the press. Majorities, for instance, want news outlets to be fair to all sides, be neutral, and be accurate. They also want the news to provide diverse points of view, and to help people understand communities and people unlike their own.

At the same time, these Americans show unmistakable signs of news fatigue and are deeply troubled by misinformation online. Fewer 16- to 40-year-olds than seven years ago say they enjoy getting news, and they are talking less with friends and family about the news. Many also report feeling worn out by being online.

And, overwhelmingly, Americans ages 16 to 40 worry about deception and misinformation. Fully 9 out of 10 feel misinformation is a problem. Seven in 10 feel they personally have been victims of it. And they are unsure who to blame for the misinformation crisis. Indeed, Gen Z and Millennials are as likely to blame the news media – a group that largely sees itself as fighting misinformation – as they are politicians or the social media platforms.

**Fatigue, Traditionalism, and Engagement: News Habits and Attitudes of the Gen Z and Millennial Generations** is the latest study from the Media Insight Project, a collaboration of the American Press Institute and The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs research. This study features a survey of 5,975 Americans ages 16 to 40, and it builds upon a 2015 study of Millennials.

The new survey’s large nationally representative sample provides an unusual opportunity for a detailed analysis of America’s most diverse generations. This report and subsequent reports from the study will examine the news behaviors and views of Gen Z (16- to 24-year-olds), younger Millennials (25- to 31-year-olds), and older Millennials (32- to 40-year-olds). The sample allows us to explore how habits and views about news vary across demographic, attitudinal, behavioral, and other characteristics between generations and within them as the sample includes interviews with 1,996 Gen Zers, 1,648 younger Millennials, and 2,331 older Millennials.

The study features many news-consumption measures first asked in the 2015 Media Insight Project of Millennials, and the findings illustrate how Millennials have changed their behaviors as they age and as the media landscape continues to rapidly evolve and how Gen Zers’ early news consumption compares to that of Millennials seven years ago.

The high levels of news consumption among 16- to 40-year-olds are similar to results the Media Insight Project found in 2015, when it researched [how Millennials get news](#). But this study also finds significant changes from 2015. Facebook has lost its place as the dominant social media platform among this population. In 2015, 57% of Millennials reported using Facebook for news every day, dwarfing all other social media pathways to news. Today, that number has fallen to 40% among Millennials and Gen Z. And, among the youngest cohort, ages 16 to 24, just 32% use Facebook for news every day.<sup>1</sup>

Almost as many Americans ages 16 to 40 now get news daily from YouTube (37%) and Instagram (34%), which is owned by Facebook's parent company, Meta, followed by TikTok (29%), Snapchat (24%), and Twitter (23%).

But having more choices online has not made people happier or more trusting of what they find. Today less than a third (32%) of 16- to 40-year-old Americans find the news enjoyable or entertaining, down from 53% in 2015. And only about a quarter of 16- to 40-year-olds have a positive view of the news media generally.

These are some of the findings of a major new survey by the Media Insight Project, a collaboration of the American Press Institute and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The survey conducted May 18 through June 8, 2022, examined the attitudes of nearly 6,000 Americans ages 16 to 40.

The new research is a follow-up to a similar study the Media Insight Project conducted in 2015. That earlier study was released at a time when many researchers were postulating that younger Americans were uninterested in news because they did not gravitate in large numbers to traditional news sources. Several prior studies described the overall Millennial generation as “newsless.”<sup>2</sup>

In 2015, The Media Insight Project took a different approach to studying this new generation. Rather than asking about news sources – such as whether they watch local TV newscasts – the study asked respondents about different topics they followed, from lifestyle and celebrities to conventional civic affairs topics. We asked if they followed those topics, how often, and how they got that news. The findings broke new ground by establishing that Millennials were avid news consumers, but that they came to news differently than older generations. They came to news through social media – and most of all through Facebook.

This new study expands the age range we examined seven years earlier, broadening it to ages 16 to 40. This allows us to survey the same generation polled seven years ago and study the next generation, Gen Z.

<sup>1</sup> The overall findings in the 2022 study for the full sample (16- to 40-year-olds) and the subset of 18- to 34-year-olds (which matches the age range of the 2015 Media Insight Project study sample) are not significantly statistically different. Therefore, throughout the report we use the comparisons between the full samples in each study (16- to 40-year-olds in 2022 compared with 18- to 34-year-olds in 2015).

<sup>2</sup> These concerns were 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), Mark Mellman in “The Young and the Newsless,” <https://thehill.com/opinion/mark-mellman/230946-mark-mellman-the-young-and-the-newsless>, and Christina T'angora Schlachter in *Newsless: How the American Media is Destroying Democracy* (CSRI Publishing, 2009).

## AMONG THE STUDY FINDINGS:

- **Millennials and Gen Z use traditional news outlets, not just social platforms.** Nearly three-quarters of 16- to 40-year-olds (74%) get news and information at least weekly from traditional news sources such as national or local TV and newspapers, including their websites or apps. Fully 45% do so daily. Most continue to rely on social media more heavily as a pathway to news; 91% get news there at least weekly. Nonetheless, these findings contradict the stereotype that traditional outlets have no place in the life of younger consumers. Of those who use traditional media daily, 28% get news from local radio stations or newspapers either in print or online, 29% from national radio programs or newspapers, and similar numbers for local and national TV-based outlets.
- **Millennials and Gen Z continue to pay for news.** In all, 28% pay out of their own pocket for news content such as magazines, newspapers, and news apps. Paying for news also increases with age, as older Millennials are the most likely to pay for news (36%) – twice the rate of Gen Z (18%). In 2015, among Millennials then, 30% paid for the same types of news out of their own pocket.
- **These generations have both traditional and novel expectations from the news media.** A majority (61%) say they want the news media to be fair to all sides, to verify and get the facts right (69%), and to be neutral (57%). Almost as many (55%) say it is very or extremely important for the press to provide diverse points of view. About half consider it important for the press to help people understand communities unlike their own (52%) and to report on solutions to society's problems (51%).
- **At the same time, enjoyment of the news is falling.** By nearly every measure, the numbers for whether people enjoy the news and how they use it are lower than seven years ago. Today less than a third (32%) of 16- to 40-year-old Americans find the news enjoyable or entertaining. Seven years ago, 53% said they enjoyed getting the news. That represents a drop of 21 percentage points. We find a similar drop in people talking about news. Seven years ago, 53% of Millennials said they liked to talk with friends and family about the news. Today that number has fallen to 37% of Gen Z and Millennials.
- **Millennials and Gen Z are feeling digital fatigue and have adopted different tactics to combat it.** While 9 in 10 Millennials and Gen Z report being online more than two hours a day, 3 in 10 report feeling worse the longer they are connected. Seventy-nine percent report doing something in response. About half (47%) say they pay attention to the way certain products try to keep them engaged, 27% try to set limits on the time they spend online, and 23% use apps or settings to track their time.
- **Trust in the press is low, but so is trust in social media. Local news fares better than national.** Only about a quarter of 16- to 40-year-olds have a positive view of the news media generally or national news outlets particularly (23%). Trust in local news media, while not great, is higher. About a third (35%) have favorable attitudes toward local media outlets. But when we dig deeper, there are signals of higher confidence. For instance, most Gen Z and Millennials find local TV stations or their websites (53%), local newspapers in print or online (59%), and even national newspapers in print or online (54%) as completely or very reliable when getting “hard news” topics. The numbers are similar for “news you can use” topics such as news about health or products.

- **Many believe the media fails to accurately cover communities of color and immigrants in America.** Nearly half (49%) believe media coverage of immigrants is slightly or totally inaccurate, and a similar percent say the same about Black Americans (48%) and Hispanic Americans (45%). Coverage of white Americans is viewed more positively, though 36% still consider it mostly inaccurate.

## SECTION I: THE NEWS CONSUMPTION HABITS OF 16- TO 40-YEAR-OLDS

### GEN Z AND MILLENNIALS USE A VARIETY OF MEDIA TO GET NEWS.

Even with signs of fatigue and worry about being online, Americans ages 16 to 40 are avid news consumers, getting news from many different sources.

The vast majority of Gen Z and Millennials get news daily (79%). Fully 96% report doing so at least weekly.

Gen Z and Millennials, moreover, consume news from a wide range of sources. That mix includes traditional national and local news outlets such as newspapers, TV news stations, their websites, or apps. It also includes a wide range of social media platforms – including Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, Reddit, LinkedIn, Twitch, and Nextdoor. Indeed, on average, those surveyed consume news from about six different traditional sources or social media platforms at least weekly.<sup>3</sup>

These generations still rely heavily on traditional sources. Fully 74% of Gen Z and Millennials consume news and information at least weekly from traditional outlets; 45% do so daily. The average 16- to 40-year-old consumes news from about two different traditional news outlets at least weekly.

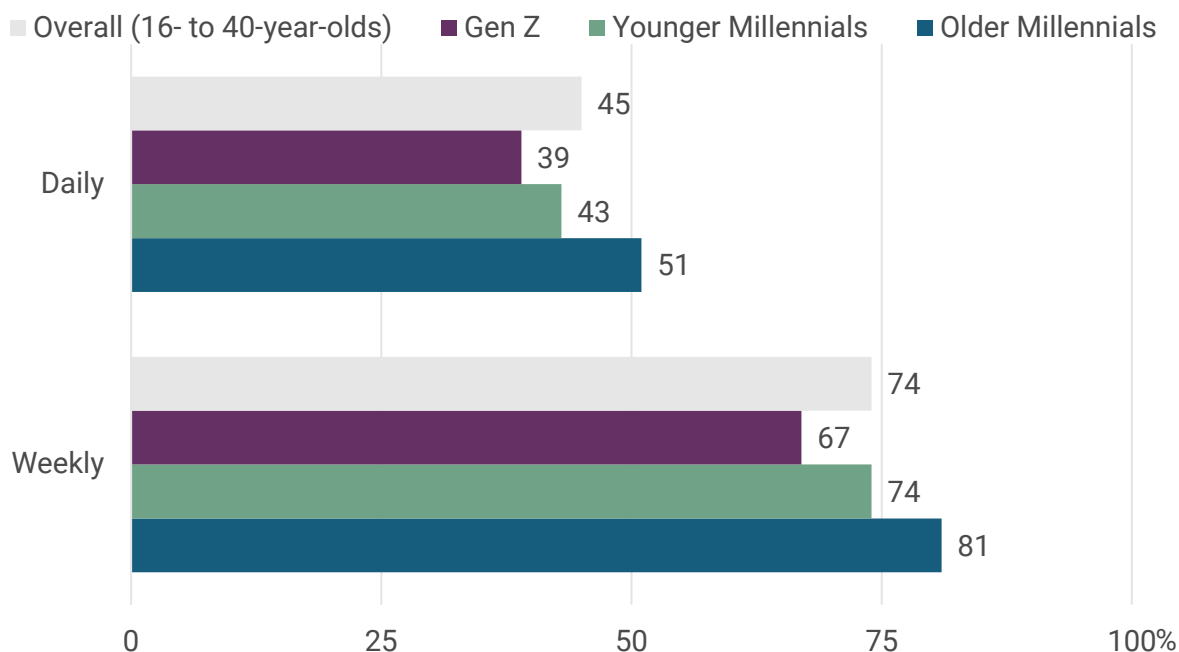
Older Millennials are more likely to rely on traditional news sources than younger Millennials and Gen Z. Forty-four percent of Gen Z report never receiving news and information from traditional sources compared with 35% of younger Millennials and 31% of older Millennials.

---

<sup>3</sup> Average number of traditional (local or national news outlets, newspapers, TV news stations, their websites, or apps) and social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Twitch, YouTube, LinkedIn, Reddit, or Nextdoor) sources used at least weekly to get news or information.

## Over 7 in 10 consume news from traditional sources weekly.

Percent of Americans ages 16 to 40 who consume news and information from at least one traditional news outlet daily or weekly



**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40 nationwide.



AMERICAN PRESS  
institute

APNORC.org

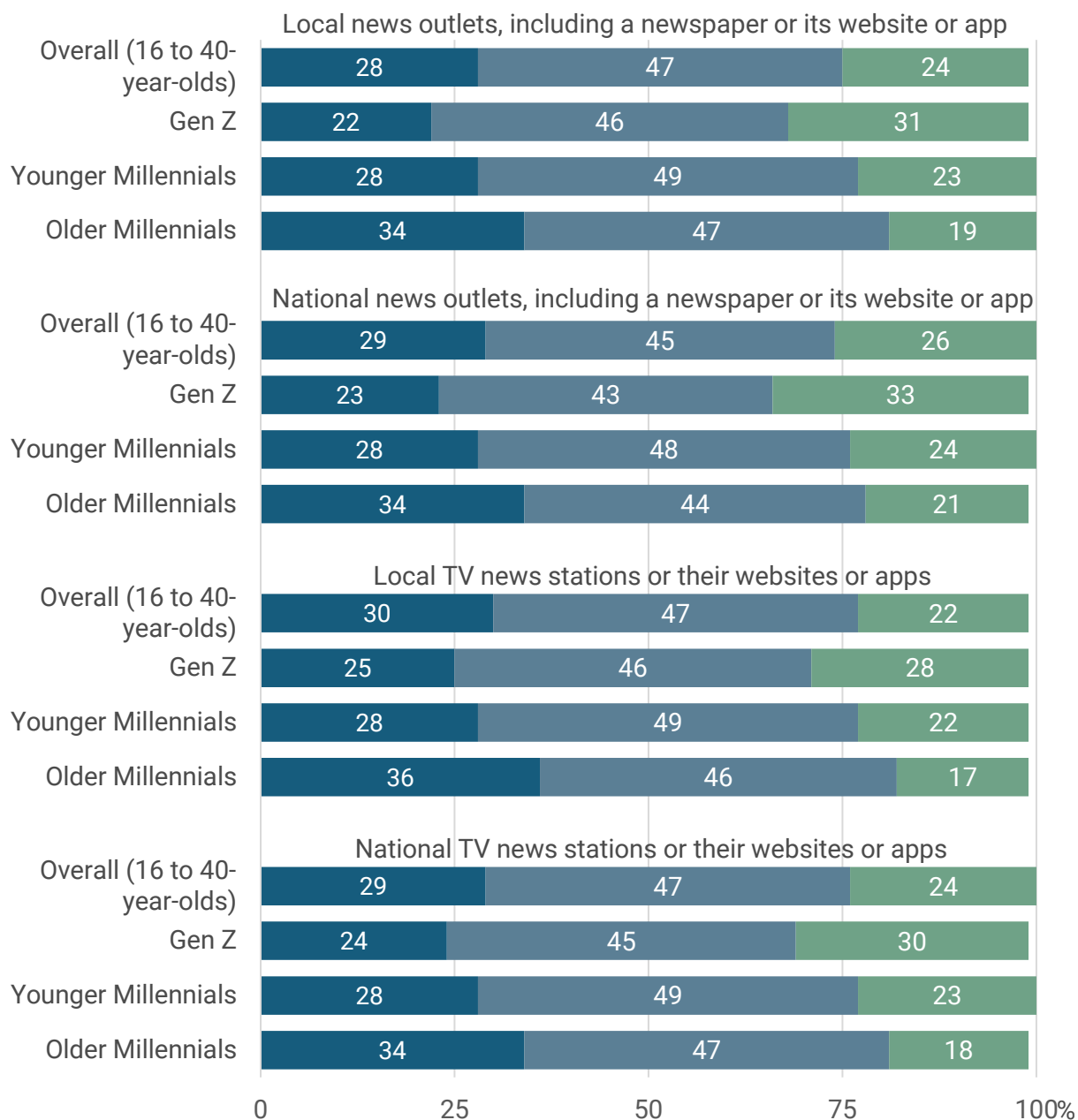
## GEN Z AND MILLENNIALS USE LOCAL AND NATIONAL NEWS WITH SIMILAR FREQUENCY.

The study suggests that local news is still an important part of the information diet of Americans ages 16 to 40. Gen Z and Millennials consume local sources just as frequently as national sources; 67% report consuming news from both local and national sources at least weekly; 37% do so daily.

## Gen Z and Millennials consume news from local and national outlets at similar frequencies.

Percent of Americans ages 16 to 40

■ Daily or more ■ Several times a week/Once a week/Less than once a week ■ Never



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

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40 nationwide.



AMERICAN PRESS  
institute

APNORC.org

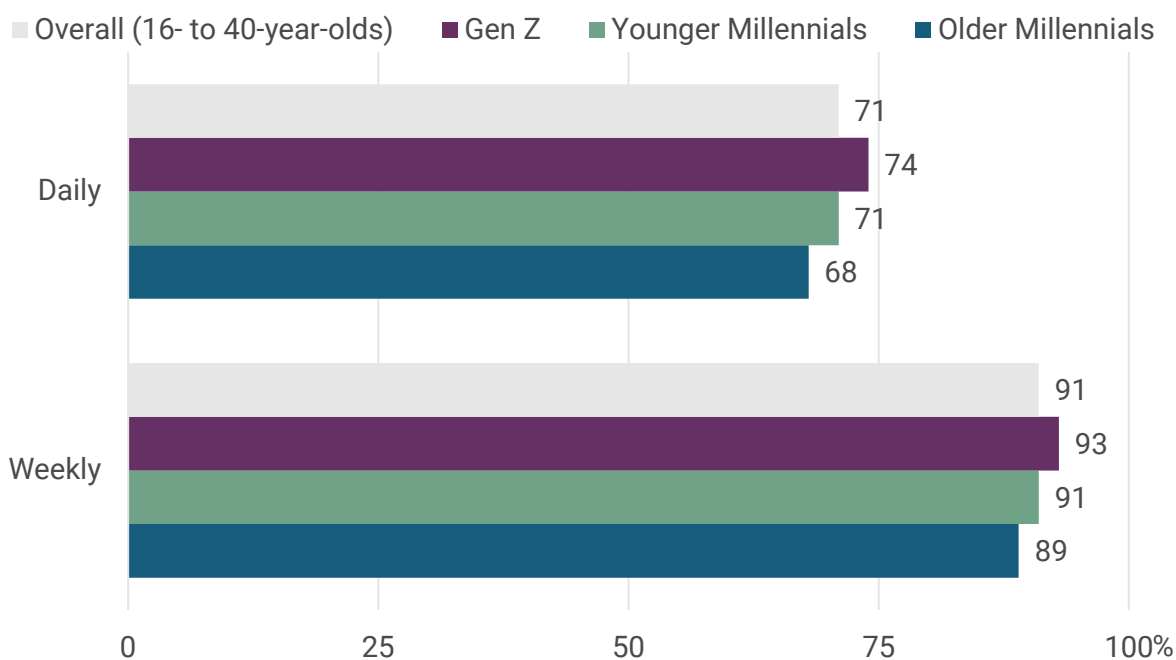
## SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS PREVAIL OVER TRADITIONAL SOURCES AMONG GEN Z AND MILLENNIALS.

For all this use of traditional news sources, however, Gen Z and Millennials are still more likely to get news and information more frequently from social media including Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, Reddit, LinkedIn, Twitch, and Nextdoor. Indeed, 71% get news from social media platforms at least daily and 91% at least weekly. On average, they consume news from about four social media platforms at least weekly.

Gen Z is especially likely to get news daily on social media platforms when compared with older Millennials (74% compared with 68% for older Millennials).

### Most consume news from social media at least weekly.

Percent of Americans ages 16 to 40 who consume news and information from at least one social media platform daily or weekly



Source: AP-NORC poll conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40 nationwide.



NORC

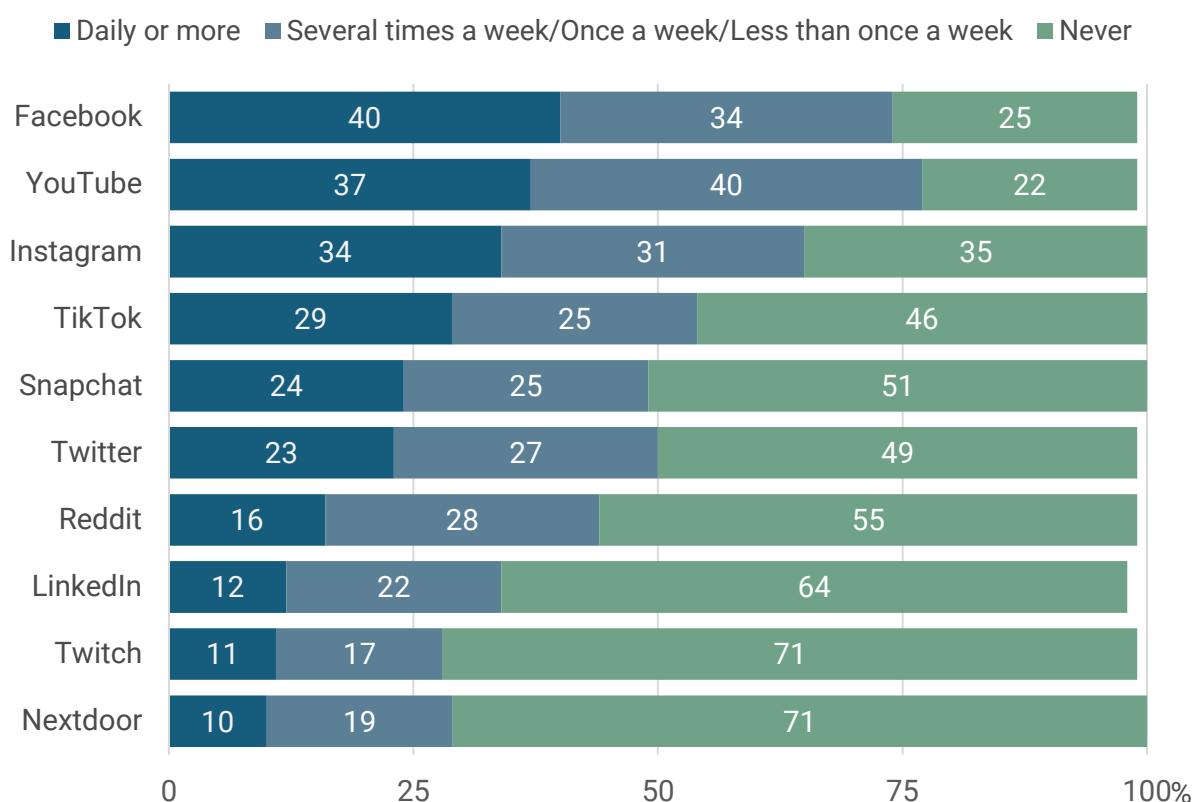
AMERICAN PRESS  
institute

APNORC.org

Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram are the social media platforms used most frequently for news. But the use of social media platforms for news varies among the age groups. Members of Gen Z are less likely to report getting news and information from Facebook daily compared with Millennials. In all, 32% of Gen Z say they get news from Facebook daily. That compares with 43% of younger Millennials and 45% of older Millennials. Instead, members of Gen Z are more likely to get news from Instagram, with fully 39% getting news daily from Instagram compared with 33% of younger Millennials and 29% of older Millennials. Members of Gen Z are also more likely than younger Millennials and older Millennials to rely on TikTok for news (40% vs. 27% and 21%) and on Snapchat (32% vs. 22% and 17%).

### Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram are the most frequently used social media for news and information among Gen Z and Millennials.

Percent of Americans ages 16 to 40



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

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40 nationwide.



NORC

AMERICAN PRESS  
institute

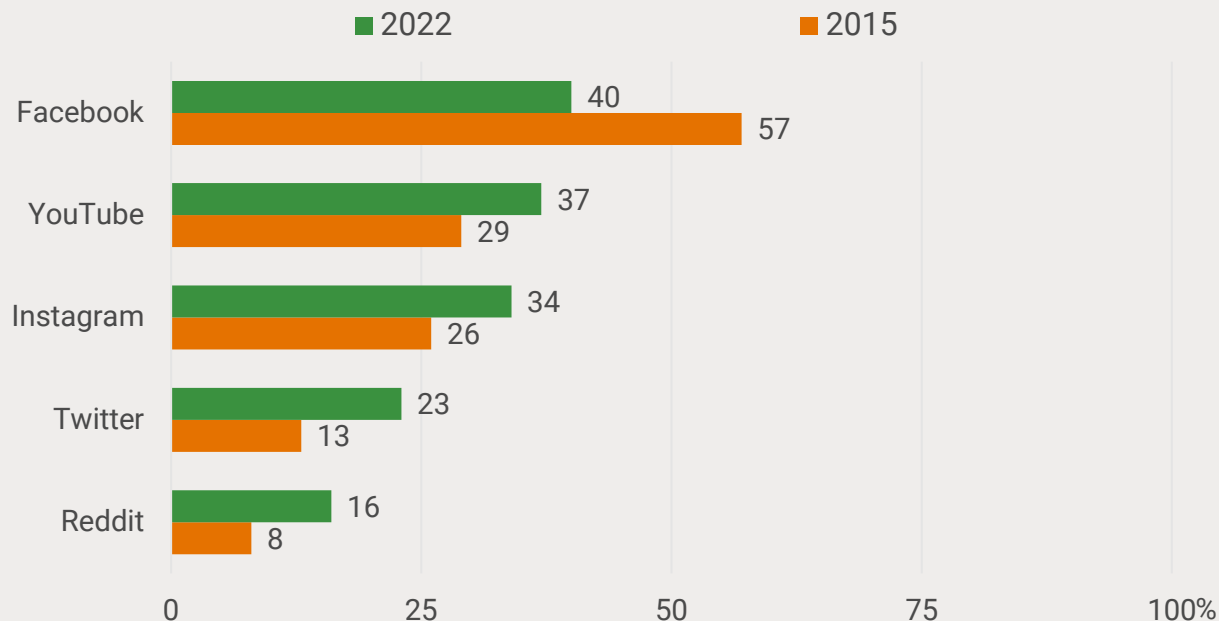
APNORC.org

## COMPARING THE NEW RESULTS TO 2015.

These numbers represent a decline for Facebook and a turn to other social platforms. Overall, 40% of 16- to 40-year-olds in 2022 are using Facebook daily for news compared with 57% in 2015. However, more are using Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and Reddit.

### Fewer are using Facebook daily compared with 2015, while more use other social media platforms for news.

Percent who consume news and information from each daily



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

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40, and January 5 to February 2, 2015, with 1,045 respondents ages 18 to 34 nationwide.



NORC

AMERICAN PRESS  
institute

APNORC.org

In 2015, 61% of younger Millennials (who were 18 to 24 years old then) used Facebook daily compared with only 43% who say the same now as 25- to 31-year-olds. The youngest generations surveyed in 2015 and 2022 also differ. In 2022, just 32% of Gen Z (16- to 24-year-olds) use Facebook daily for news compared with 61% of younger Millennials in 2015.

## LIFESTYLE, HARD NEWS, AND NEWS YOU CAN USE TOPICS.

One way the Media Insight Project has probed news consumption among younger Americans is to query people on where and how they get news and information on different topics, rather than asking about news in general. This approach helps avoid the problem that some respondents might define news differently than others. We also ask about the sources they use to get news and information. This allows us to understand how people may use social media as a pathway to news.

As we found in 2015, the 2022 survey shows that Gen Z and Millennials follow news on a wide range of topics. To get at this, the survey asks about 29 separate topics. We then group those topics into three categories. The “hard news” category includes such topics as government or politics, the economy, and crime and public safety. “News you can use” includes such topics as COVID-19 information, elections and voting information, traffic, transportation, and weather. “Lifestyle news” includes such topics as celebrities and entertainment, food and cooking, and health and fitness.

On average, Gen Z and Millennials follow about nine different news or information topics out of the 29 asked on the survey.

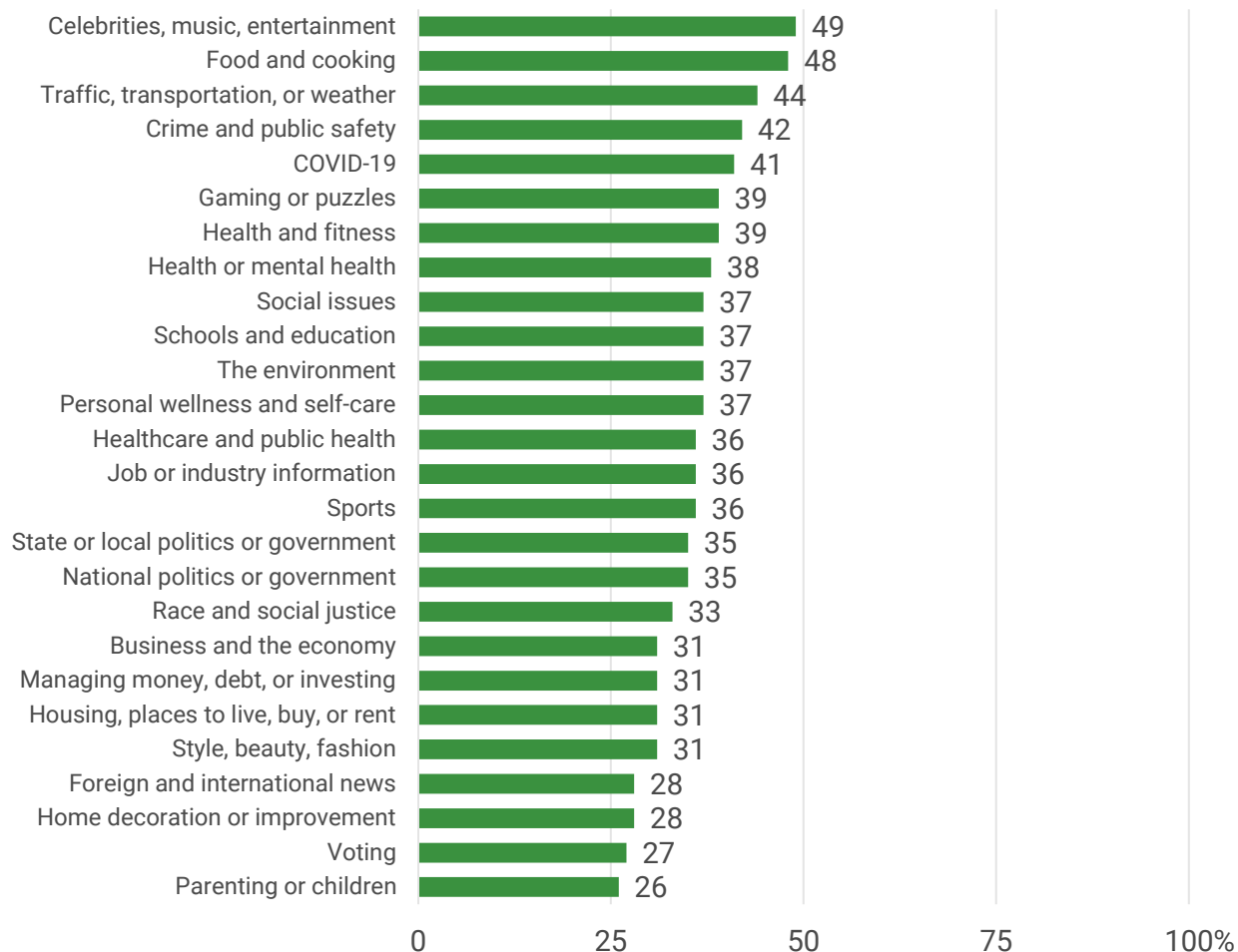
They also tend to follow a similar number of “lifestyle” topics (3 out of 9), as well as “news you can use” topics (3 out of 9), and “hard news” topics (4 out of 11). These findings basically remain unchanged from 2015, when they followed an average of 9.5 topics overall and four “hard news” topics.

The most-followed topic among Gen Z and Millennials is news and information related to celebrities, music, TV, movies, or entertainment. About half (49%) say they follow that topic regularly and 48% follow food and cooking. About 4 in 10 say they follow topics such as traffic, transportation, or weather, crime and public safety, and news about COVID-19.

The chart below shows all 29 topics. At the bottom of the list, though still followed by sizable minorities, are foreign or international news, home decoration or improvement, information on voting, or information related to children or parenting.

## Celebrities, food and cooking, traffic and weather, crime, and COVID-19 are the topics most followed by Gen Z and Millennials.

Percent of Americans ages 16 to 40 who follow each topic



**Question:** Here are some news and information topics. Which of these topics, if any, do you follow?

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40 nationwide.



AMERICAN PRESS  
institute

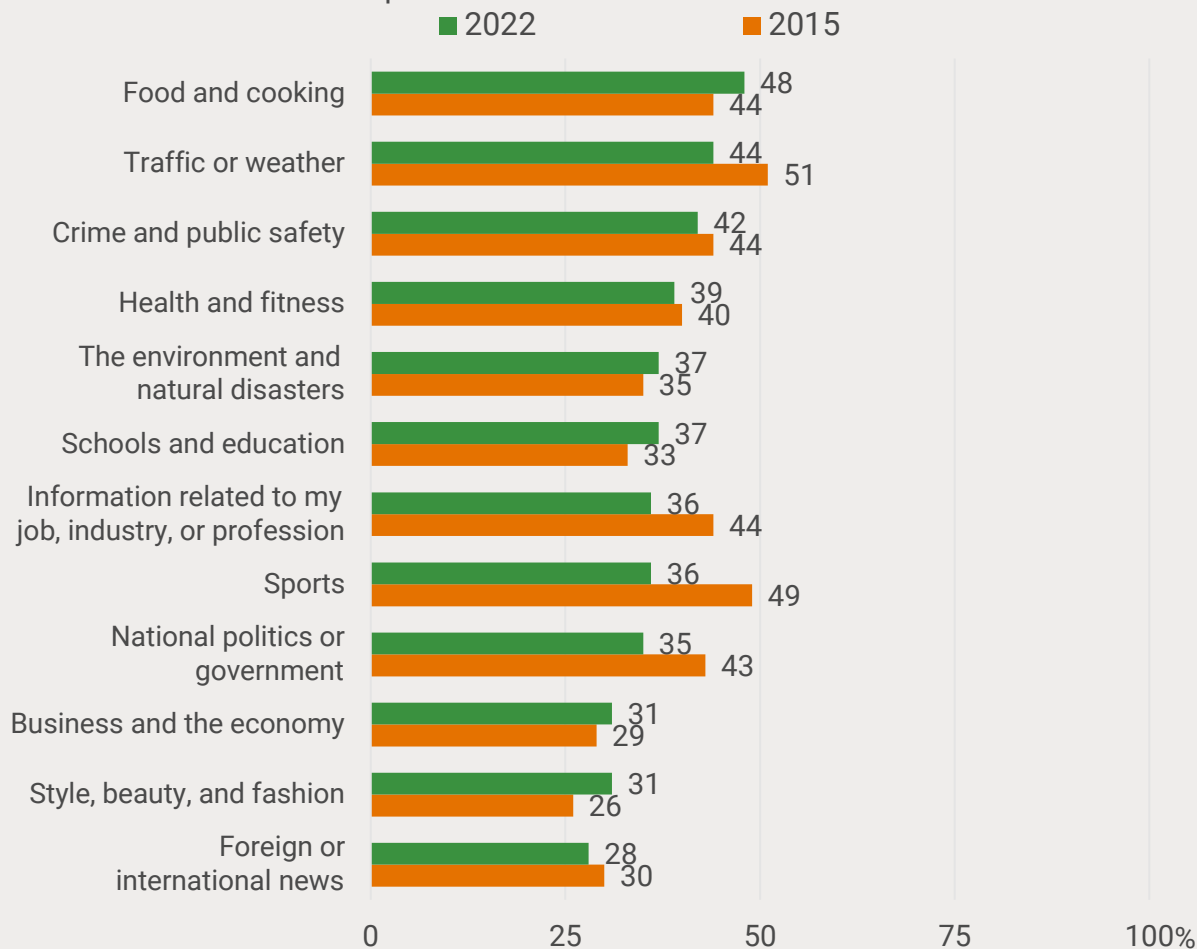
APNORC.org

## COMPARING THE NEW RESULTS TO 2015.

Some of these numbers diverge compared with what we found in 2015. For instance, fewer Gen Z and Millennials report following sports than did seven years ago. Fewer report following news about their job or profession, and national politics and government now than seven years ago.<sup>4</sup>

### Fewer are following sports, information about their job, or national politics.

Percent who follow each topic



**Question:** Here are some news and information topics. Which of these topics, if any, do you follow?

**Source:** AP-NORC polls conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40 and January 2 to February 2, 2015, with 1,045 respondents ages 18 to 34 nationwide.



NORC

AMERICAN PRESS  
institute

APNORC.org

<sup>4</sup>These findings are also significant when restricting the 2022 sample to ages 18 to 34, the same age range as the 2015 sample.

## **GEN Z AND MILLENNIALS CONTINUE TO ACTIVELY SEEK OUT NEWS.**

One of the key findings of our study of Millennials seven years ago was comparing the behavior of people we dubbed news “Seekers” versus “Bumpers.” Seekers are people who say that on balance they actively seek news they follow. Bumpers are people who say on balance they let the news find them.

Overall, we find the mix of Bumpers and Seekers among Gen Z and Millennials has not changed in the last seven years, despite the proliferation of social media platforms.

In all, 38% of Gen Z and Millennials say they actively seek news; 61% say they mostly bump into it. This is nearly identical to Millennials in 2015, when 39% said they actively seek news.

With age, people are more likely to actively seek the news – 44% of older Millennials and 40% of younger Millennials say they seek news, compared with just 29% of Gen Z.

## **GEN Z AND MILLENNIALS PAY FOR AND DONATE TO NEWS SERVICES.**

One critical question for the news industry is whether younger news consumers are willing to pay for news. With the maturation of the web, advertising revenue has dramatically shifted from news organizations (where it underwrote journalism) to digital platforms that do not employ traditional journalists or produce their own news content. Meta (Facebook) and Alphabet (Google) by themselves control close to two-thirds of all digital advertising revenue.<sup>3</sup> To survive, news organizations increasingly must diversify their revenue, for example relying more on subscriptions, donors, and members, for revenue.

In all, 28% of Gen Z and Millennials say they pay for at least one news product such as print or digital magazines, print or digital newspapers, and digital news apps. This includes 18% of Gen Z, 30% of young Millennials, and 36% of older Millennials. Another 18% report someone else paying for at least one of these products, including 23% of Gen Z, 17% of young Millennials, and 16% of older Millennials.

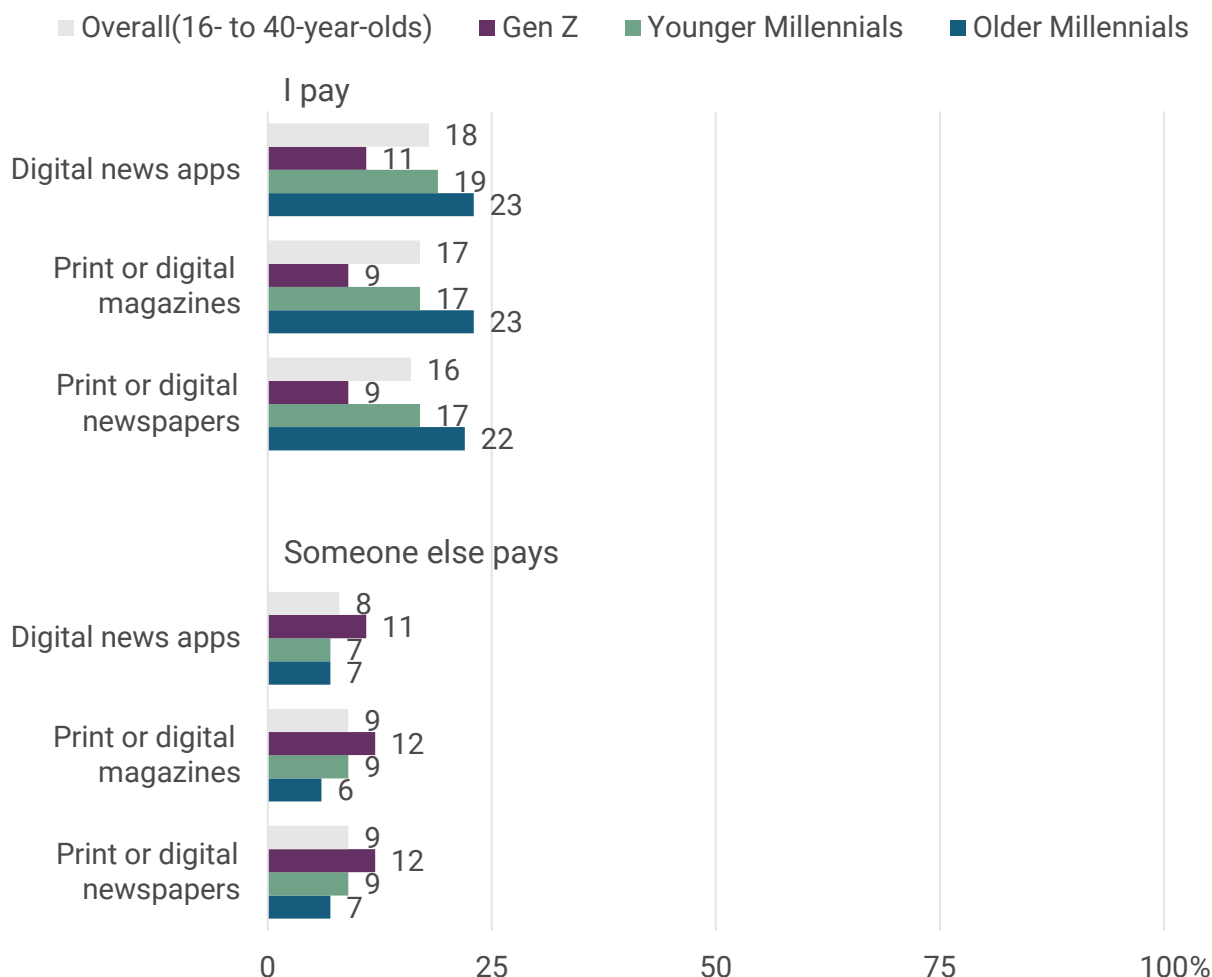
Those numbers are similar to what we found seven years earlier. In 2015, 30% of Millennials said they paid for a subscription to a product such as a print or digital magazine, print or digital newspaper, or a digital news app.

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/03/amazon-online-advertising-meta-twitter-snap-and-pinterest.html>

## About 3 in 10 Gen Z and Millennials pay for at least one news product.

Percent of Americans ages 16 to 40 who say they pay or someone else pays for each



**Question:** Please select any of the following types of 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, in the case of a nonprofit, whether you have donated or joined as a member.

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40 nationwide.



AMERICAN PRESS  
institute

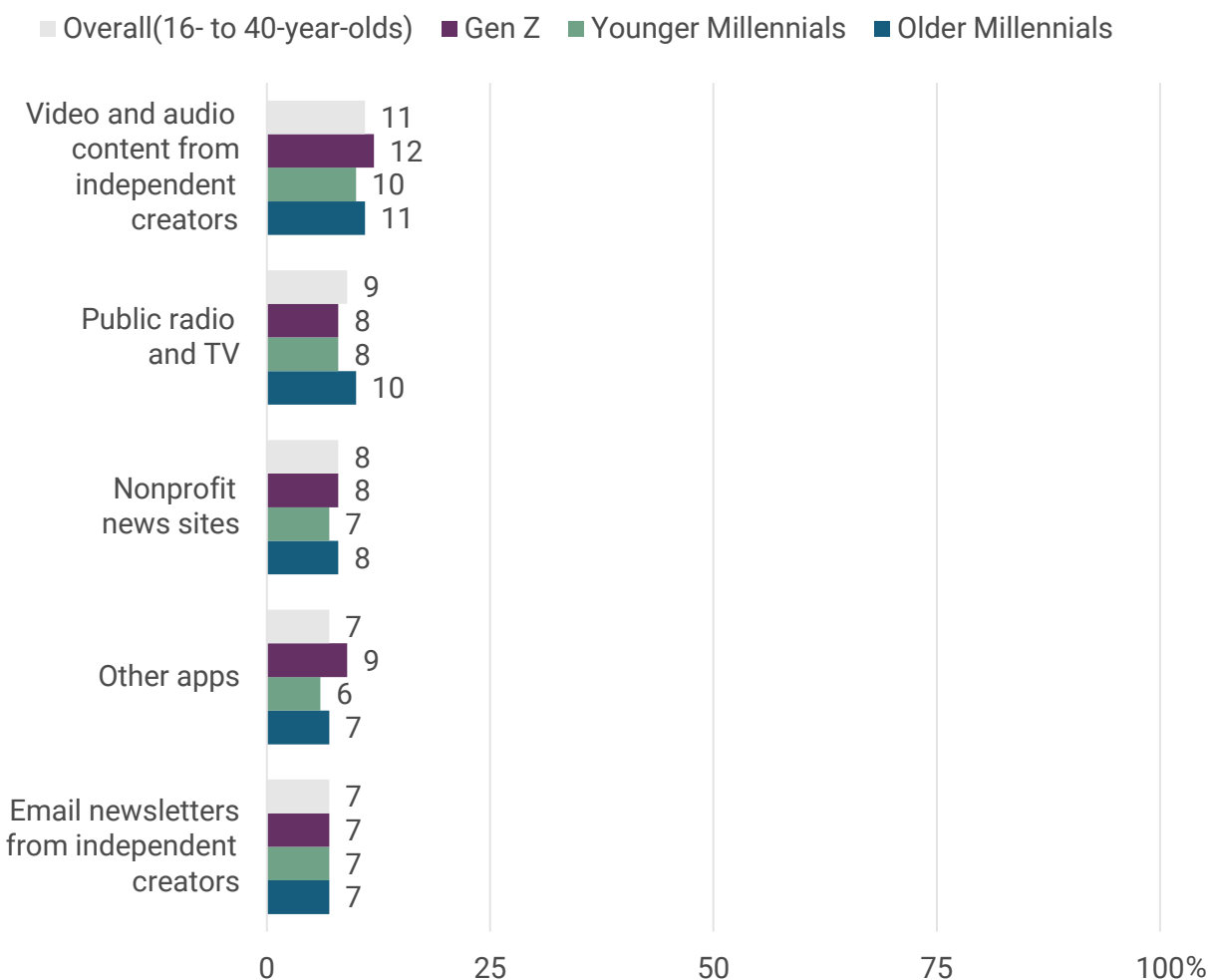
APNORC.org

One growing trend in journalism is the launch of nonprofit news sites and the rise of independent creators (who are not necessarily nonprofit). This news sector was once largely limited to public radio and television. Today, there are hundreds of nonprofit news operations and news platforms from independent creators relying on contributions from members and foundations. How popular are these sites among Gen Z and Millennials who pay for news?

The numbers suggest nonprofit sites, independent creators, and public radio and TV have become an important part of news consumption of these generations. In all, 25% of Gen Z and Millennials have become a member or have donated to at least one of these news operations. This includes 26% of Gen Z, 22% of younger Millennials, and 25% of older Millennials.

### 1 in 4 donate to or are a member of at least one media organization.

Percent of Americans ages 16 to 40 who donate to or are a member of each



**Question:** Please select any of the following types of 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, in the case of a nonprofit, whether you have donated or joined as a member.

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40 nationwide.



NORC

AMERICAN PRESS  
institute

APNORC.org

## **GEN Z AND MILLENNIALS SHARE, TEXT, TALK ABOUT, EMAIL, OR COMMENT ON NEWS DAILY, BUT THAT BEHAVIOR IS DECLINING**

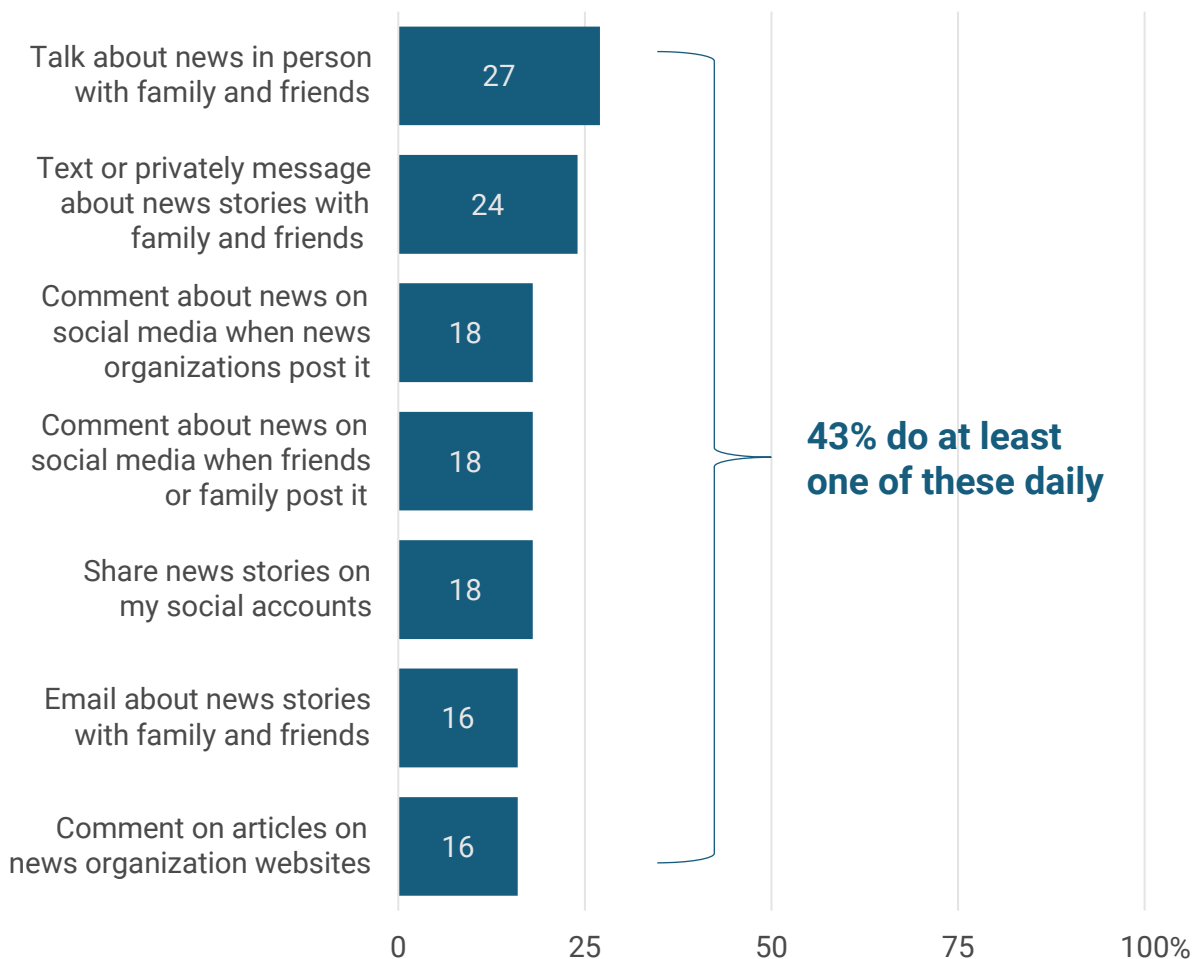
Another important issue facing the news industry is how people use the news they get. Understanding this is a key factor for news organizations to create products that have sufficient value for consumers to be willing to pay for them.

The survey finds that Gen Z and Millennials use news in a variety of ways, but many of these numbers appear to also be slipping from seven years ago.

Nearly half (43%) of Gen Z and Millennials engage with the news through sharing, texting, emailing, or commenting at least once a day.

## Gen Z and Millennials are sharing, texting, talking, emailing, and commenting on news daily.

Percent of Americans ages 16 to 40 who do each at least daily



**Question:** How often do you do each of the following?

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40 nationwide.



AMERICAN PRESS  
institute

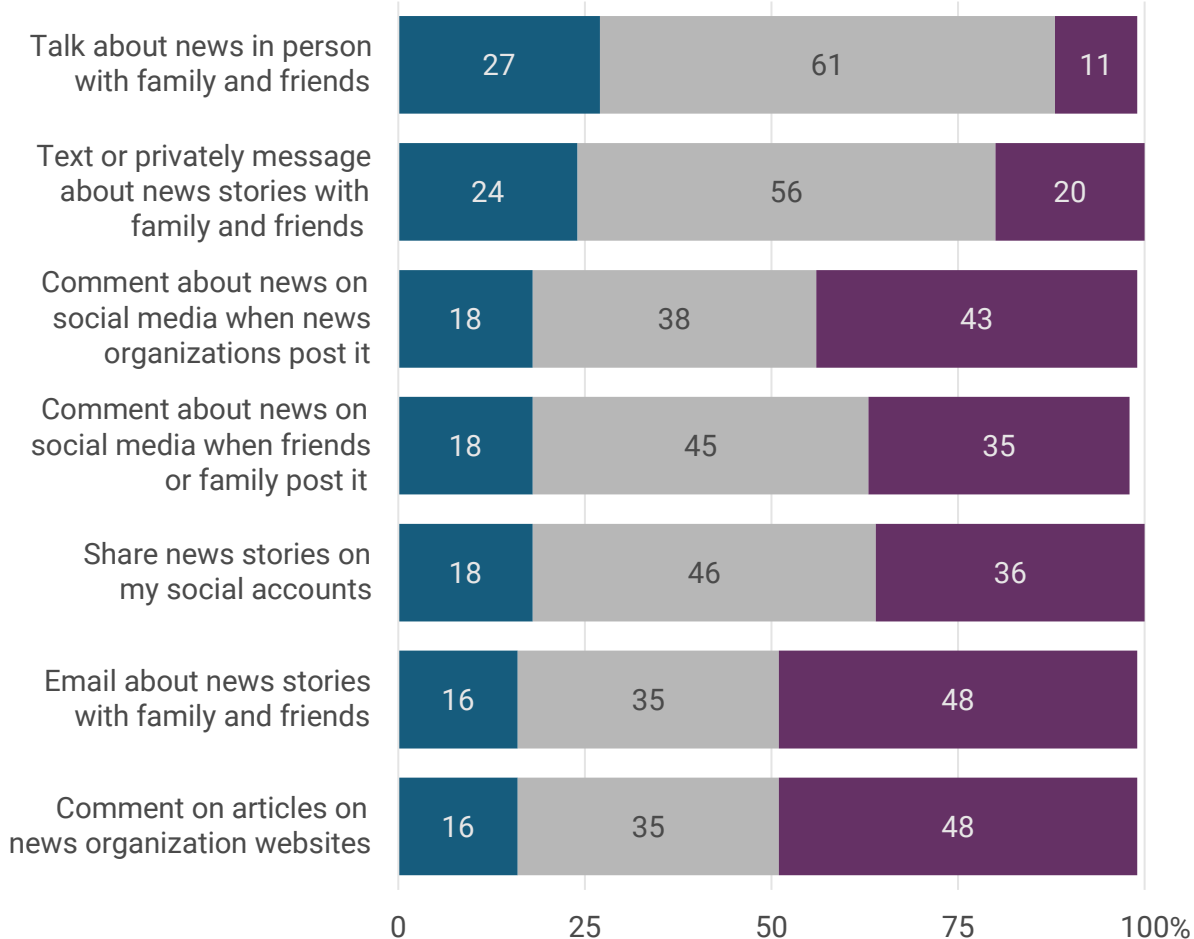
APNORC.org

They are more likely to engage directly with family and friends rather than engage with news online or through social media accounts. Forty percent of Gen Z and Millennials either text, share, comment, or talk about news with family and friends at least once per day while only 27% do the same with other social media accounts or news organizations' websites at least once a day.

## Gen Z and Millennials are sharing, texting, talking, emailing, and commenting on news daily.

Percent of Americans ages 16 to 40

■ Daily or more ■ Several times a week/Once a week/Less than once a week ■ Never



**Question:** How often do you do each of the following?

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40 nationwide.



AMERICANPRESS  
institute

APNORC.org

## SECTION II: NEWS AND DIGITAL FATIGUE

### GEN Z AND MILLENNIALS FEEL DIGITAL FATIGUE AND ARE CONCERNED ABOUT MISINFORMATION IN THE MEDIA.

Much has changed in the public discourse around information and news since 2015. When our first survey was published, Donald J. Trump had not been elected president or popularized the description of traditional media as “fake news.” People had not heard about foreign governments using social media platforms to spread misinformation in an attempt to influence U.S. elections. Online conspiracy groups like QAnon had not emerged. TikTok did not exist.

How has any of this altered the way 16- to 40-year-old Americans feel about their time online? The survey finds significant evidence that Gen Z and Millennials are weary of and are deeply troubled by the spread of misinformation, even as they continue to spend large amounts of time connected.

First, Gen Z and Millennials are online a significant amount of time. Over 9 in 10 report spending at least two hours a day online, including 56% who are online for more than 5 hours and 24% more than 9 hours.

We then asked Gen Z and Millennials about how they feel about their time online. They could choose multiple responses. Of those options, the most widely chosen – by roughly half of Gen Z and Millennials – is that they pay attention to how certain products (sites, platforms, or apps) try to keep them engaged.

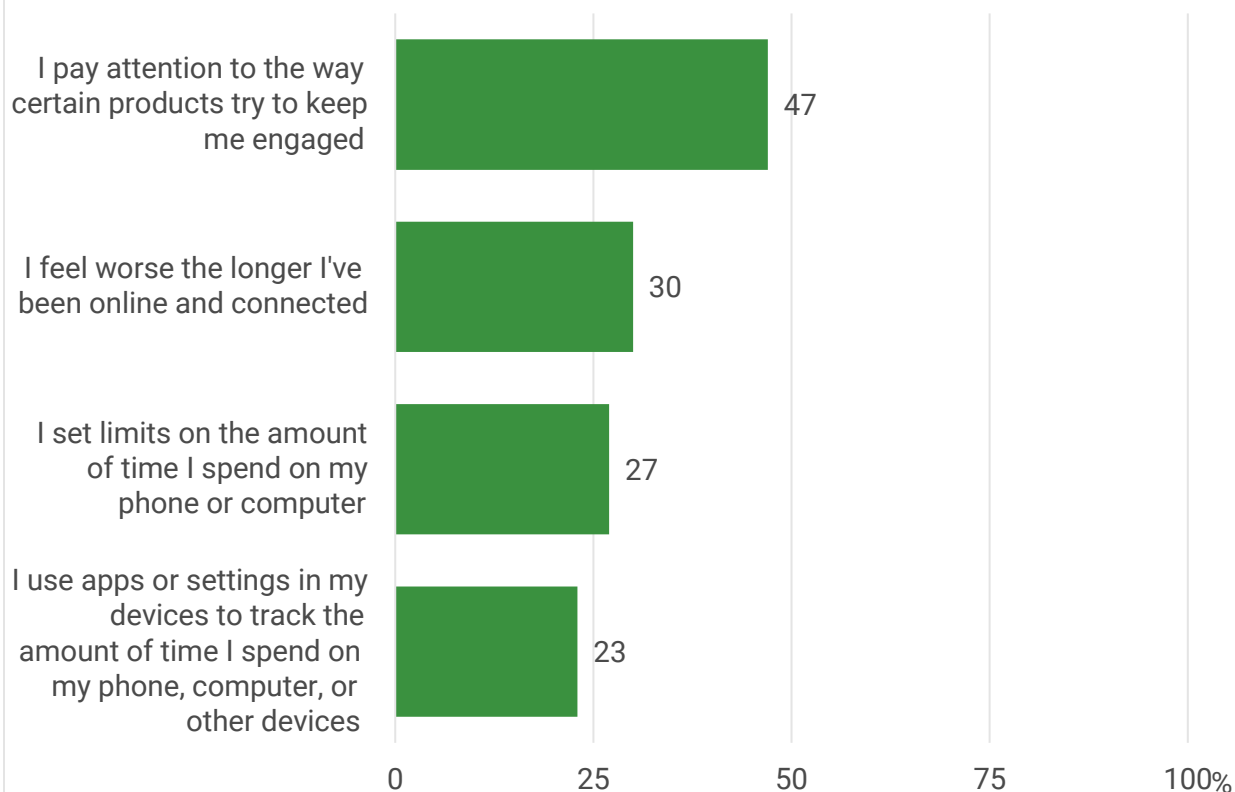
The second most widely registered response, by 30%, is that they feel worse the longer they are connected online.

Younger Millennials (34%) are slightly more likely than older Millennials (30%) and Gen Z (27%) to report that they feel worse the longer they spend online.

Overall, 79% of Gen Z and Millennials say they do at least one of the following to monitor or limit the amount of time they spend online: paying attention to how products keep them engaged, setting time limits on devices, or tracking time spent on devices.

## About a quarter set limits on the amount of time spent on devices.

Percent of Americans ages 16 to 40



**Question:** Do any of the following statements describe the way you interact with online content, or not?

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40 nationwide.



AMERICANPRESS  
institute

APNORC.org

## COMPARING THE NEW RESULTS TO 2015.

Compared with 2015, there are more signs of news fatigue.

The chart below shows a variety of reasons for using news and information. Today, fewer people cite each of these reasons compared with 2015.

Overall, fewer Gen Z and Millennials are finding the news enjoyable or use the news to engage with friends, family, or their community than in our survey in 2015. Only about a third of Gen Z and Millennials, for example, say they use news and information because they find it enjoyable or entertaining, compared with over half who said the same in 2015.

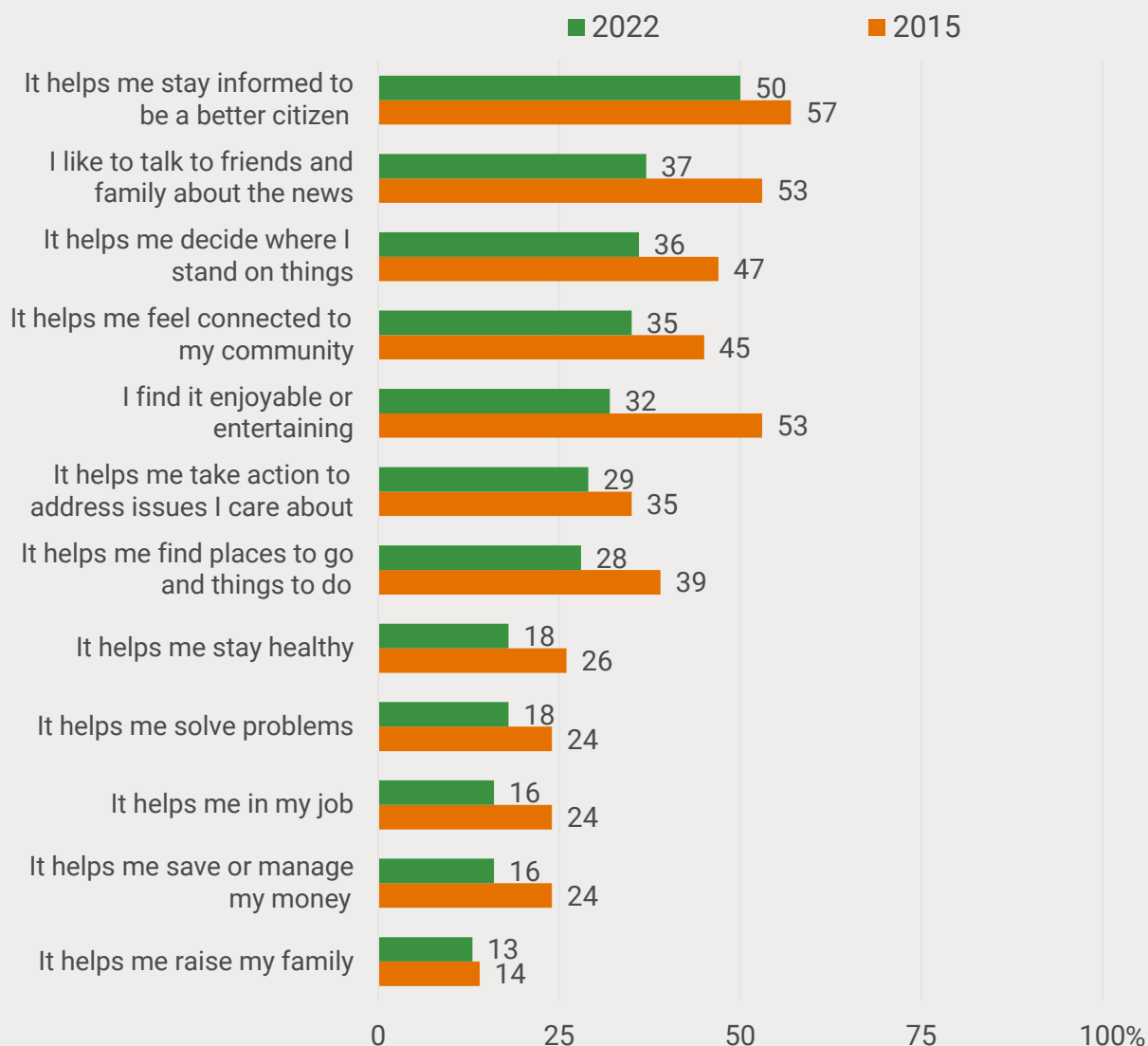
The drop among Gen Z and Millennials who say they like to talk to friends and family about the news fell almost as far, down to 37% from 53% in 2015.

Fewer say the news helps them stay informed to be a better citizen. The percentage of Gen Z and Millennials who say the news helps them decide where to stand on things fell from nearly half in 2015 to just over a third in 2022.

Indeed, almost every metric is notably lower in 2022 than in 2015.

## Compared with 2015, fewer use news and information because they find it enjoyable.

Percent who say each is a reason for using news and information



**Question:** People use news and information in different ways. What are the main reasons you, personally, use news and information?

**Source:** AP-NORC polls conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40 and January 5 to February 2, 2015, with 1,045 respondents ages 18 to 34 nationwide.



AMERICAN PRESS  
institute

APNORC.org

## A LESS VARIED NEWS DIET.

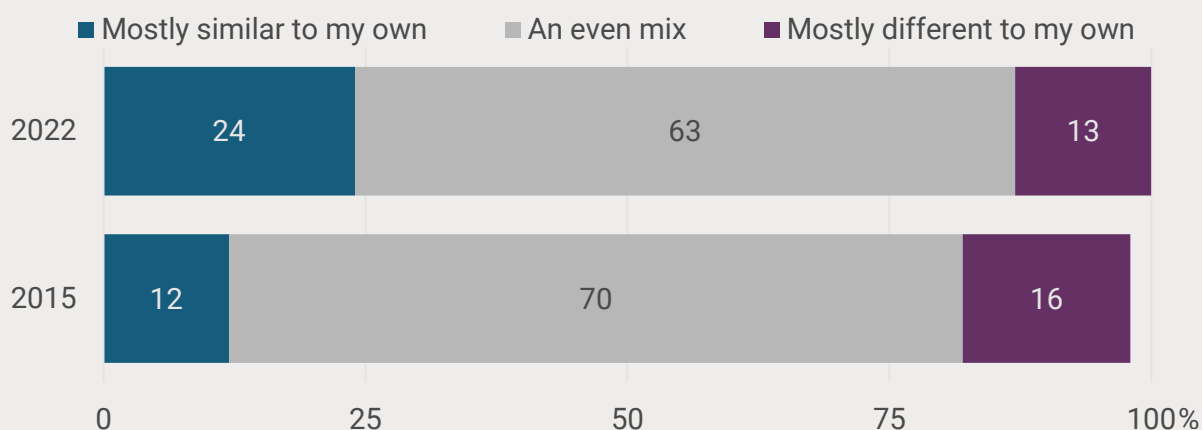
Seven years ago, the survey suggested that younger Americans' social media use widened the perspectives they encountered in their lives. That is now less true.

Compared with 2015, Gen Z and Millennials now are twice as likely (12% vs. 24%) to say the opinions they see in their social media feeds are mostly similar to their own instead of mostly different or evenly mixed.

The percentage of Americans who say they see a mix of views in their social media feeds has also declined significantly, from 70% in 2015 to 63% in 2022. While that is still a majority, it is a significant change.

### More are seeing opinions mostly similar to their own in social media feeds.

Percent of Americans ages 16 to 40



**Question:** Would you say that opinions you see in social media feeds are...?

**Source:** AP-NORC polls conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40 and January 5 through February 2, 2015, with 1,045 respondents ages 18 to 34 nationwide.

**AP** | **NORC** **AMERICANPRESS**  
institute

APNORC.org

At the same time, perhaps partly in response, we see a slight uptick of those who say they actively seek differing opinions.

Overall, nearly 8 in 10 (78%) Gen Z and Millennials say they tend to investigate opinions different from their own up from 73% in 2015.

## WIDESPREAD CONCERNS ABOUT MISINFORMATION.

Another new finding involves how the respondents view misinformation. Nearly 9 in 10 say misinformation about current events and important issues is a problem – including 61% who consider it a major problem and 26% who say it is a minor problem. Only 12% say misinformation is not a problem. About 7 in 10 believe they have been personally exposed to misinformation.

But Gen Z and Millennials seem uncertain about whom to blame. They spread the blame for misinformation widely across many different institutions, holding the press just as responsible as institutions such as foreign governments. Indeed, the majority of Gen Z and Millennials equally believe the media, social media companies, the government, and social media users bear blame for misinformation and should have a responsibility to address the problem.

These numbers about misinformation can also be compared with the general population, including Americans older than the group surveyed in this study. Gen Z and Millennials are as worried about misinformation online as are older Americans, (as found in a general population survey of American adults conducted in October 2021).<sup>5</sup> But Gen Z and Millennials are less worried about being exposed to misinformation than Americans adults overall.

About half of Gen Z and Millennials (48%) worry they have spread misinformation themselves – including 17% who are very or extremely concerned, and 31% who are somewhat concerned.

But they are more inclined to be concerned that they have been exposed to misinformation than think they have personally spread it. They are also more worried that family members have spread false information online than that they have themselves (60% vs. that 48%).

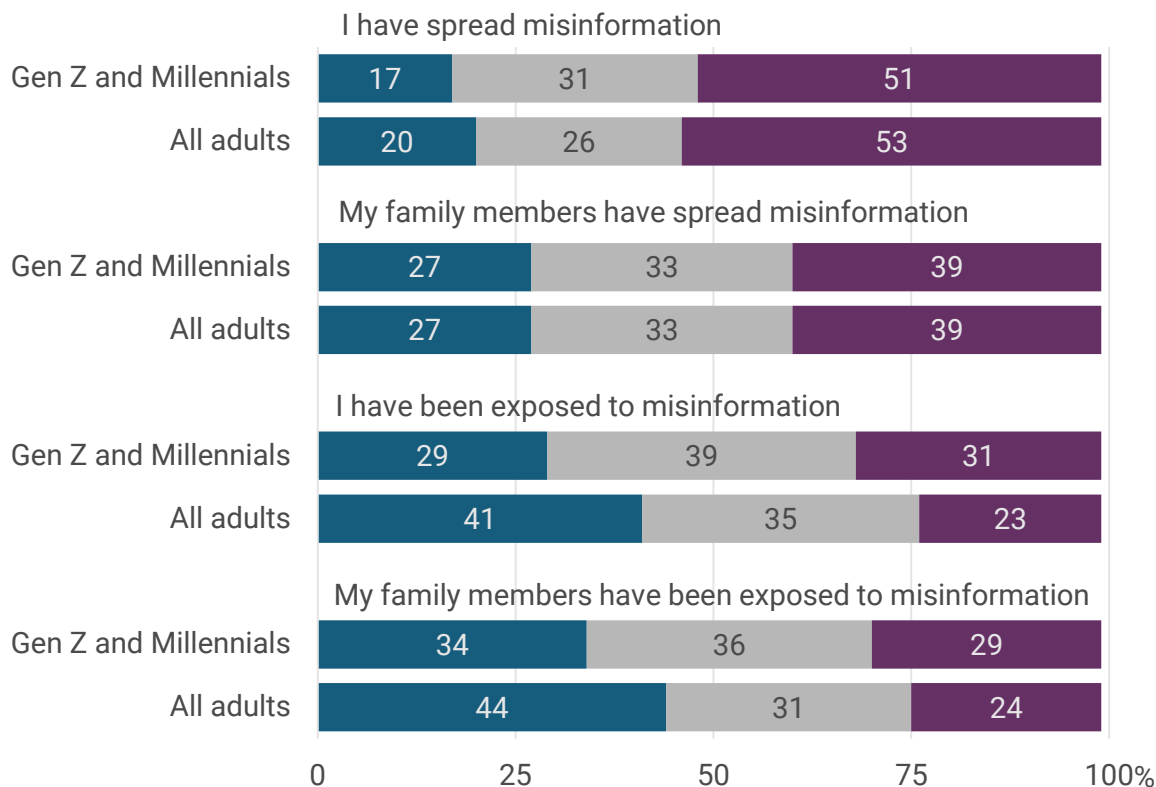
---

<sup>5</sup>The nationwide poll was conducted by the Pearson Institute for the Study and Resolution of Global Conflicts at the University of Chicago and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research from September 9-13, 2021, using AmeriSpeak®, the probability-based panel of NORC at the University of Chicago. The nationwide poll was conducted through online and telephone interviews using landlines and cell phones with 1,071 adults. The margin of sampling error is +/- 3.9 percentage points. The poll is being released in conjunction with the 2021 Pearson Global Forum, which will address these issues. <https://apnorc.org/projects/the-american-public-views-the-spread-of-misinformation-as-a-major-problem/>

## Misinformation is a concern for Gen Z and Millennials.

Percent of each population

■ Very/Extremely concerned ■ Somewhat concerned ■ Not at all/Not very concerned



**Question:** How concerned are you about each of the following?

**Source:** AP-NORC polls conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40 and September 9-13, 2021, with 1,071 adults age 18 and older nationwide.



AMERICAN PRESS  
institute

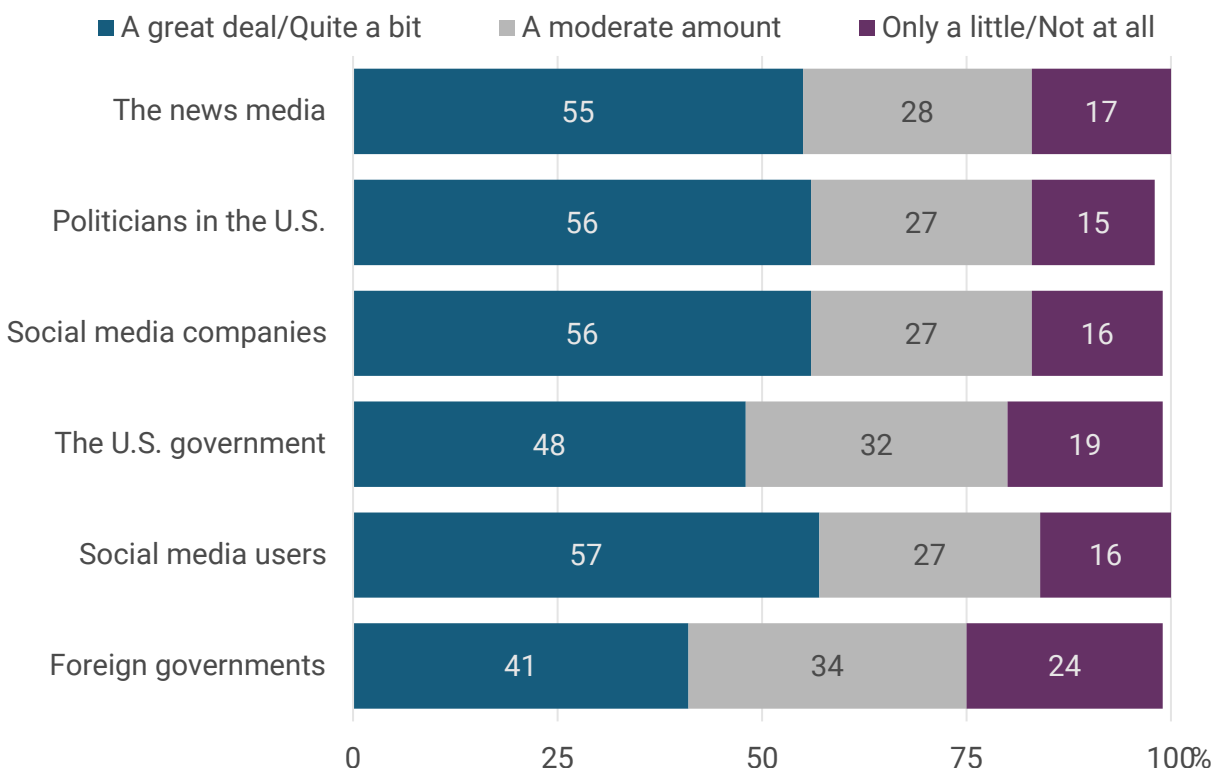
APNORC.org

But Gen Z and Millennial Americans are not specific about who they think is responsible for this environment of misinformation or what should be done about it. Instead, they tend to blame all institutions equally and want them all to do something.

When it comes to who is responsible for the spread of misinformation, the news media, politicians, and social media companies top the list along with the U.S. government. But here social media users and foreign governments are held slightly less responsible.

## Gen Z and Millennials see a shared responsibility for the spread of misinformation.

Percent of Americans ages 16 to 40



**Question:** How much responsibility do you think each of the following has for the *spread* of misinformation about current events and important issues?

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40 nationwide.

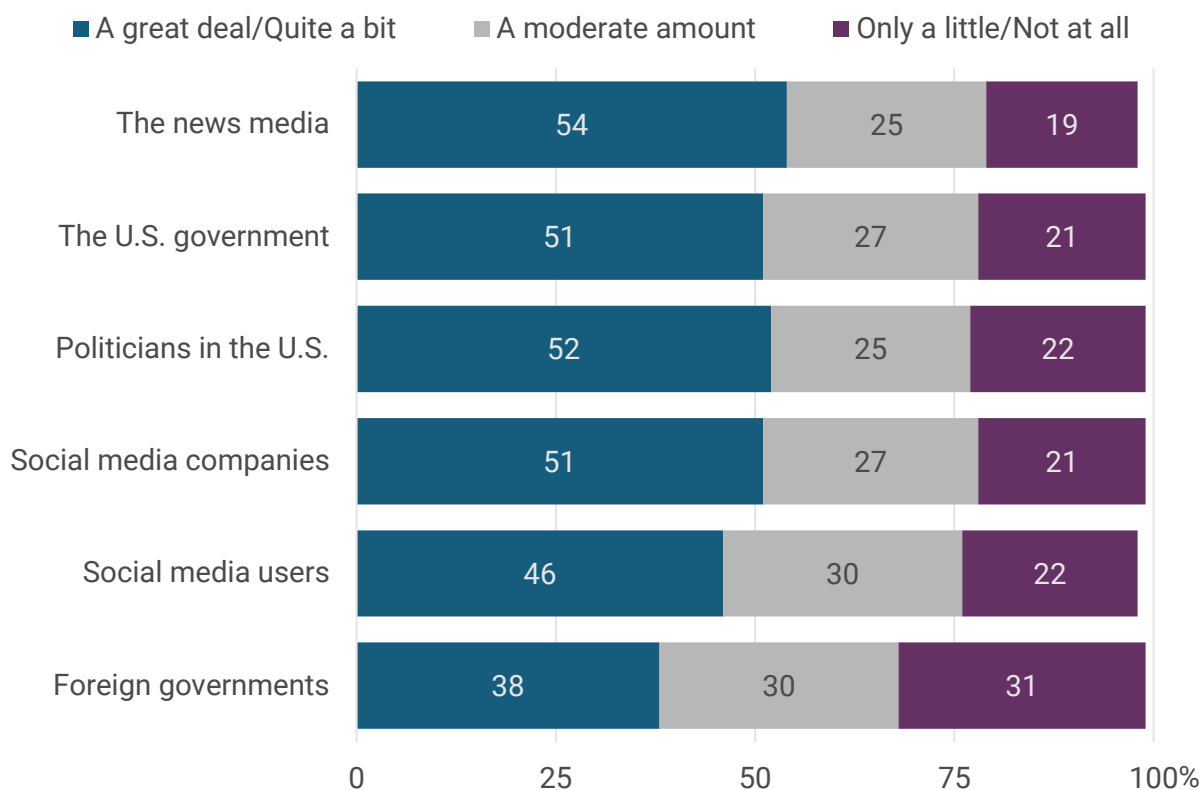


APNORC.org

Who then should do something to address misinformation online? Gen Z and Millennials have the same rather broad list in about the same order. The press tops the list, and government, politicians, and social media companies are all close behind.

## Stakeholders are seen as equally responsible to address misinformation spread.

Percent of Americans ages 16 to 40



**Question:** How much responsibility do you think each of the following has for the *addressing* the spread of misinformation about current events and important issues?

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40 nationwide.



APNORC.org

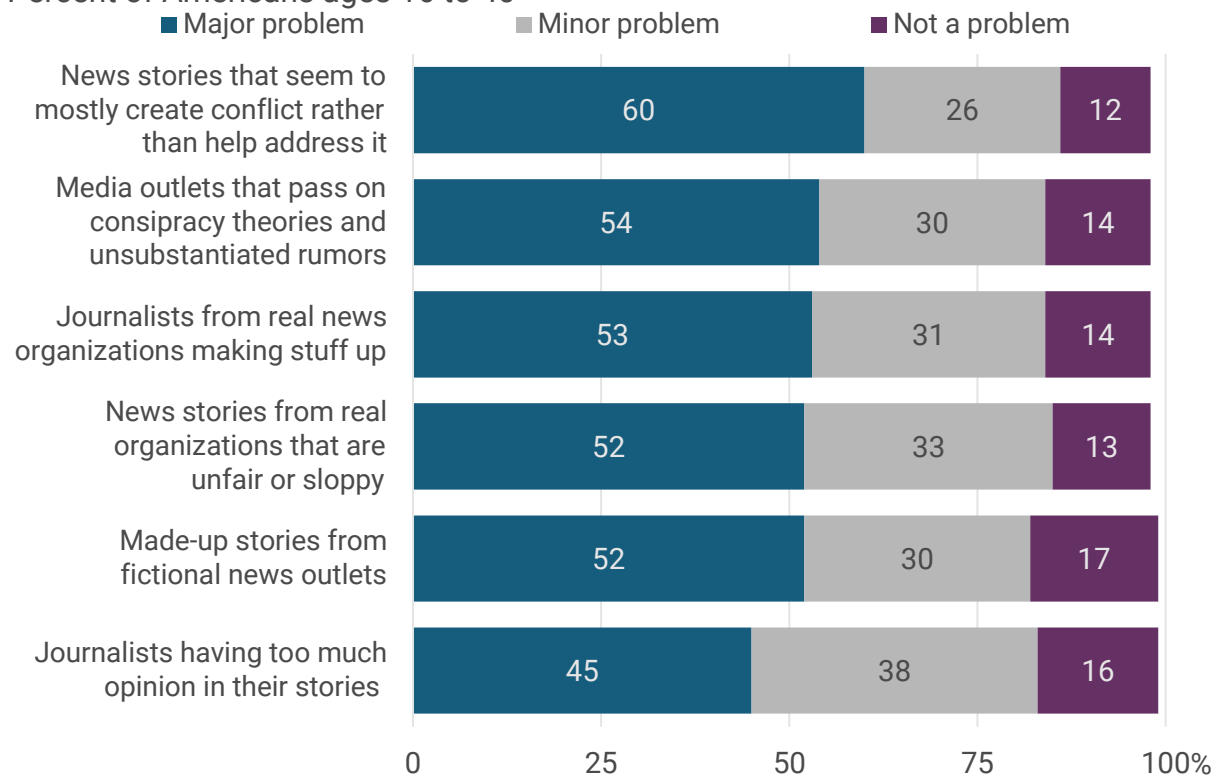
## CONCERNS ABOUT THE BROADER MEDIA ENVIRONMENT AMONG MILLENNIALS AND GEN Z.

Beyond the spread of misinformation, Gen Z and Millennials have other concerns about the press as well. Majorities of Gen Z and Millennials think the press is too conflict-oriented, passes on conspiracy theories, and makes things up.

More specifically, 6 in 10 Gen Z and Millennials think the press is too focused on conflict. Majorities also see media outlets passing on conspiracy theories and journalists making things up as major problems. Fewer cite journalists having too much opinion in their stories as a major problem.

## Issues related to the broader information environment seen as a major problem.

Percent of Americans ages 16 to 40



**Question:** How big of a problem do you think each of the following is today?

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40 nationwide.



APNORC.org

## SECTION III: TRUST AND EXPECTATIONS

### **GEN Z AND MILLENNIALS HOLD TRADITIONAL EXPECTATIONS OF THE PRESS AND HAVE SOME POSITIVE VIEWS OF THE MEDIA.**

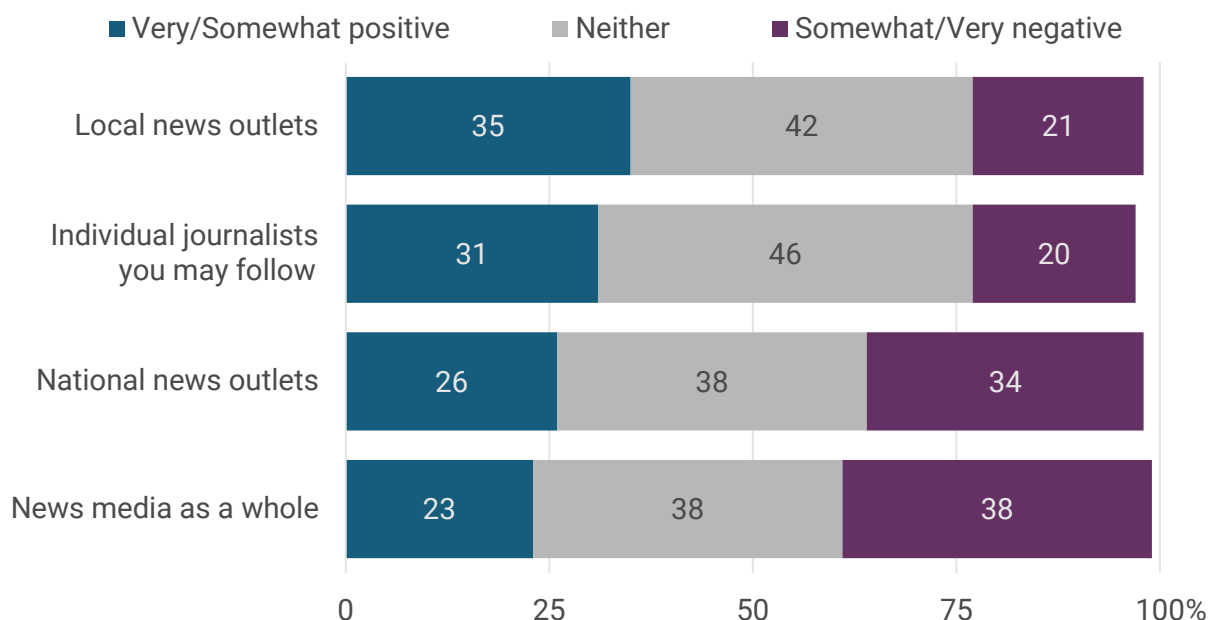
Concerns about misinformation and the role of the press in spreading it may contribute to a negative perception of the media as a whole among Gen Z and Millennials. However, the survey also finds Gen Z and Millennials hold some media sources – especially local news outlets – in a relatively positive light. The results suggest a complex relationship with some hopeful signs for further development. For example, Millennials and Gen Z tend to cite the news media as a trusted source where they can find reliable information.

Nearly a third say there are individual journalists they follow who they have positive views about, more than the 1 in 5 who tend to think negatively about the individual journalists they follow. More than a third have a positive view overall of the local media (compared with 21% who have a negative view).

At the same time, only 23% have a positive view of the news media as a whole compared with 38% who have a negative view. And 26% have a positive view of the national media, compared with 34% who have a negative view.

## Gen Z and Millennials view local news media more positively than negatively.

Percent of Americans ages 16 to 40



**Question:** For each of the following items related to the news media, please indicate whether you have a very positive, somewhat positive, neither positive nor negative, somewhat negative, or very negative view of that item.

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40 nationwide.



APNORC.org

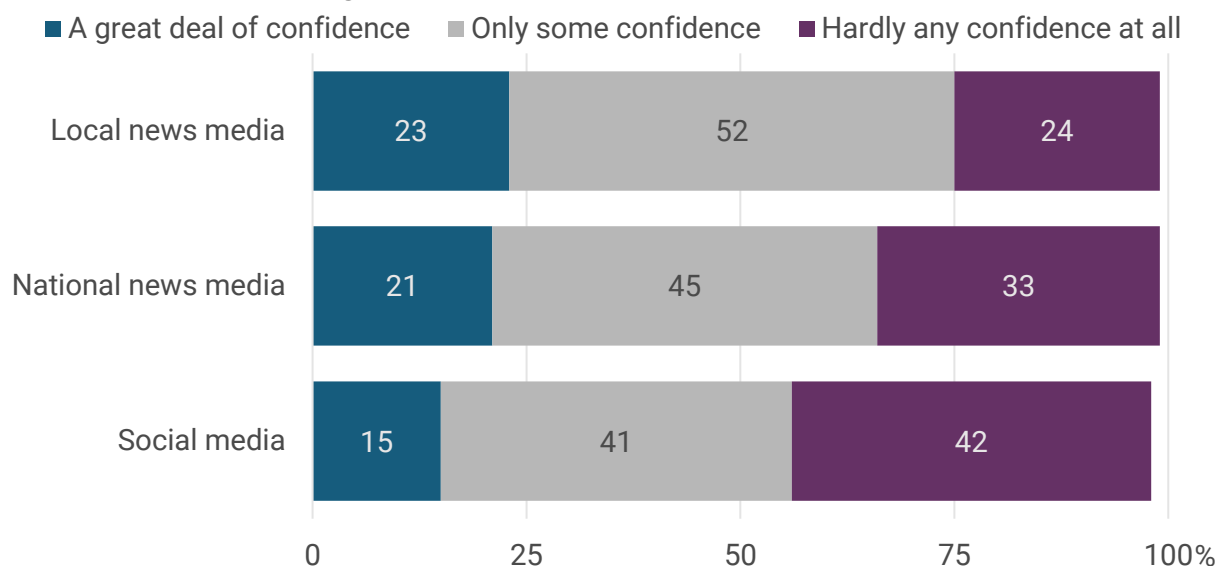
Given that these questions about approval of institutions only reflect broad sentiments, researchers find it can be useful to ask related questions in different ways to probe more deeply at people's feelings.

In this survey we did that by asking how much confidence people have in those in top management of different types of media (social media and traditional media). Here we find that news media outlets – and local outlets in particular – fare better than some other institutions. For instance, Gen Z and Millennials have the highest confidence in people running local media. They have far less confidence in people running social media companies.

Overall, 23% of Gen Z and Millennials have a great deal of confidence in those running local media. Twenty-one percent have a lot of confidence in those who run national media outlets. But only 15% have as much confidence in those who run social media companies. Indeed, 41% of Gen Z and Millennials have hardly any confidence at all in those who run social media companies.

## There is more confidence for those running local news media companies.

Percent of Americans ages 16 to 40



**Question:** Listed below are some institutions in this country. As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40 nationwide.



APNORC.org

## GEN Z AND MILLENNIALS WANT MORE DIVERSE COVERAGE FROM THE MEDIA.

Overall, Gen Z and Millennials have concerns about news coverage related to race and issues of equity. And most want more representation across all media outlets.

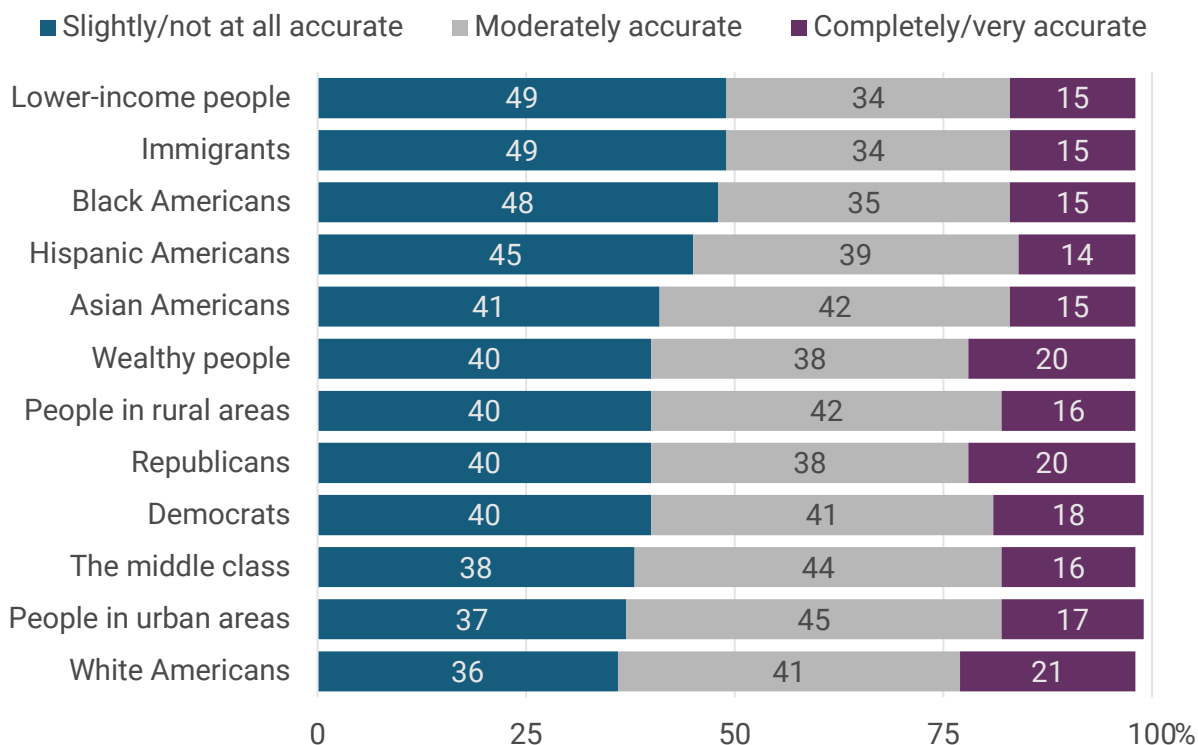
For instance, nearly half of 16- to 40-year-olds say the media does not portray immigrants, low-income people, and Black Americans accurately. They see white Americans as the demographic group most accurately depicted by news media.

Nearly half of Gen Z and Millennials think coverage of immigrants is inaccurate. Only 15% believe the press gets this coverage right. The numbers are similar for coverage of Black Americans. Only 15% of Gen Z and Millennials think press coverage of Black Americans is accurate, while 48% consider it inaccurate. The numbers are almost identical when it comes to coverage of Hispanic Americans and Asian Americans.

The perception of the coverage of white Americans is better. But even here only 21% consider the coverage completely or very accurate and 36% consider it inaccurate.

## Immigrants, low-income people, and Black Americans are not portrayed accurately in the news media.

Percent of Americans ages 16 to 40



**Question:** Thinking about news coverage in general, how accurately do you think news organizations portray each of the following topics?

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40 nationwide.



APNORC.org

## GEN Z AND MILLENNIALS HAVE NUANCED EXPECTATIONS OF THE NEWS MEDIA.

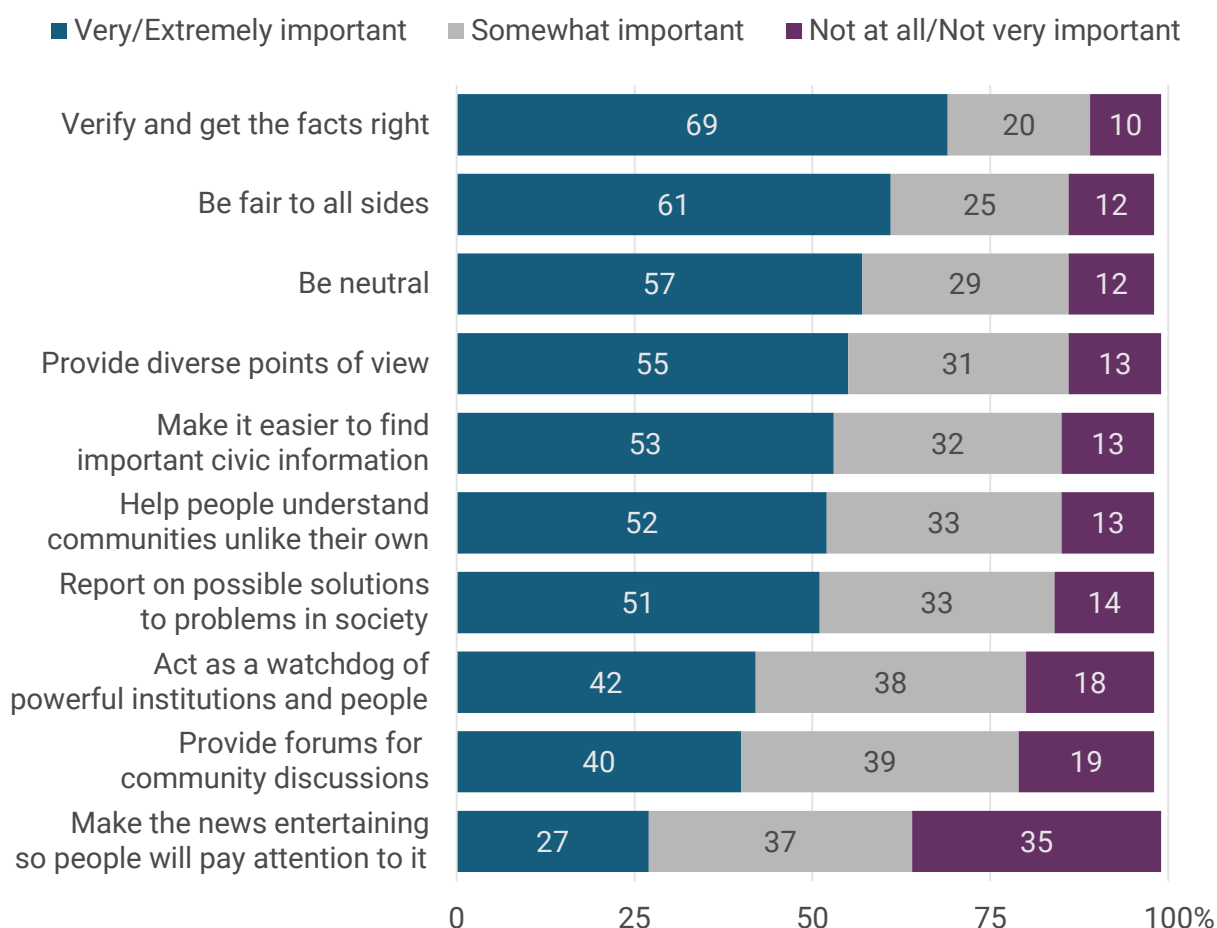
Understanding what Millennials and Gen Z want from the news – both national and local – is essential for the long-term financial health of media outlets. Our survey shows that Gen Z and Millennials have some relatively traditional expectations: Most want the press to verify facts and maintain neutral positions on the issues of the day. Meanwhile, they also seek diverse points of view and representation in news media content.

Gen Z and Millennials consider it important for the press to focus on serious matters that can help people understand each other and solve problems. About half want the press to provide important civic information, to report on solutions to society's problems, and to help people to understand their communities.

In contrast, fewer than half of Gen Z and Millennials say it is very or extremely important for the press to act as a watchdog – a role most journalists place high on their list of priorities.<sup>7</sup> Even fewer Gen Z and Millennial Americans say it is especially important for the press to provide forums for discussions, and barely more than a quarter say it is a priority that the news be entertaining.

### Expectations for the media include traditional news values and more.

Percent of Americans ages 16 to 40



**Question:** How important do you think each of the following is for the news media to try to do?

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40 nationwide.



AMERICANPRESS  
institute

APNORC.org

<sup>7</sup> Americans and the News Media. What they do – and don't – understand about each other. <https://apnorc.org/projects/americans-and-the-news-media-what-they-do-and-dont-understand-about-each-other/>

We have some comparative data on some of these priorities from a study four years ago. In 2018,<sup>8</sup> The Media Insight Project queried Americans on media priorities and had a large sample of people ages 18 to 39. In that survey, 81% of adults younger than 40 said getting the facts right was very important. While this is still the number one priority in 2022, the percent is far lower, 69%.

Fairness is also a top value, but again significantly lower than what it was four years ago. The percentage of Gen Z and Millennials who consider fairness as very important for the press is down from 70% in 2018 to 61% today.

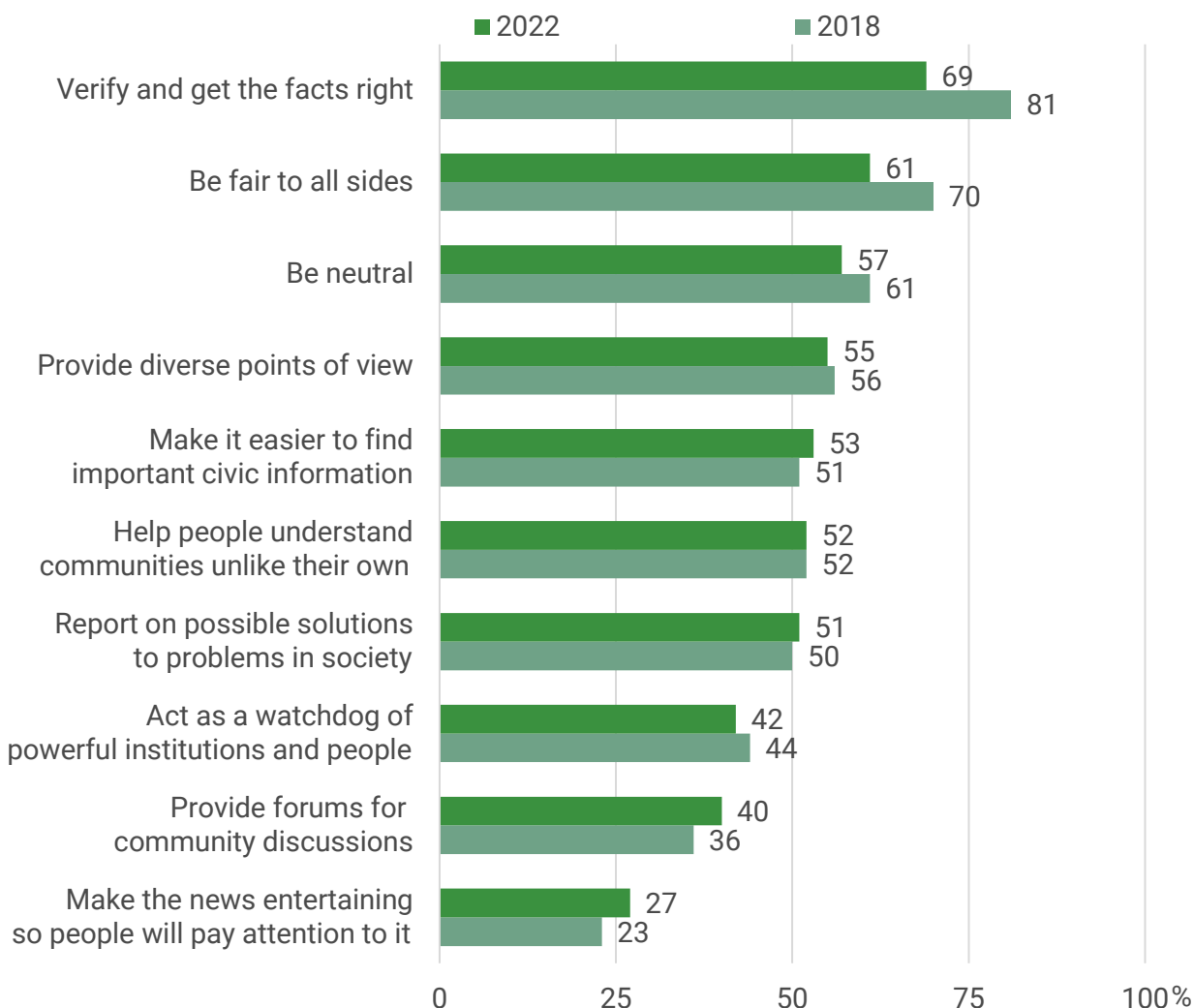
No other values show significant differences, including the continued desire for neutrality. Discerning whether these differences indicate a trend of some kind or a blip that might be influenced by something in this survey would require more research, but they are worth monitoring.

---

<sup>8</sup>The two surveys in this study were conducted by the Media Insight Project, an initiative of the American Press Institute and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The general population survey of 2,019 adults using NORC's AmeriSpeak® Panel was conducted from March 21 through April 17, 2018, via the web and telephone. <https://apnorc.org/projects/americans-and-the-news-media-what-they-do-and-dont-understand-about-each-other/>

## Fairness and verifying facts still seen as priorities for the news media.

Percent who say extremely or very important



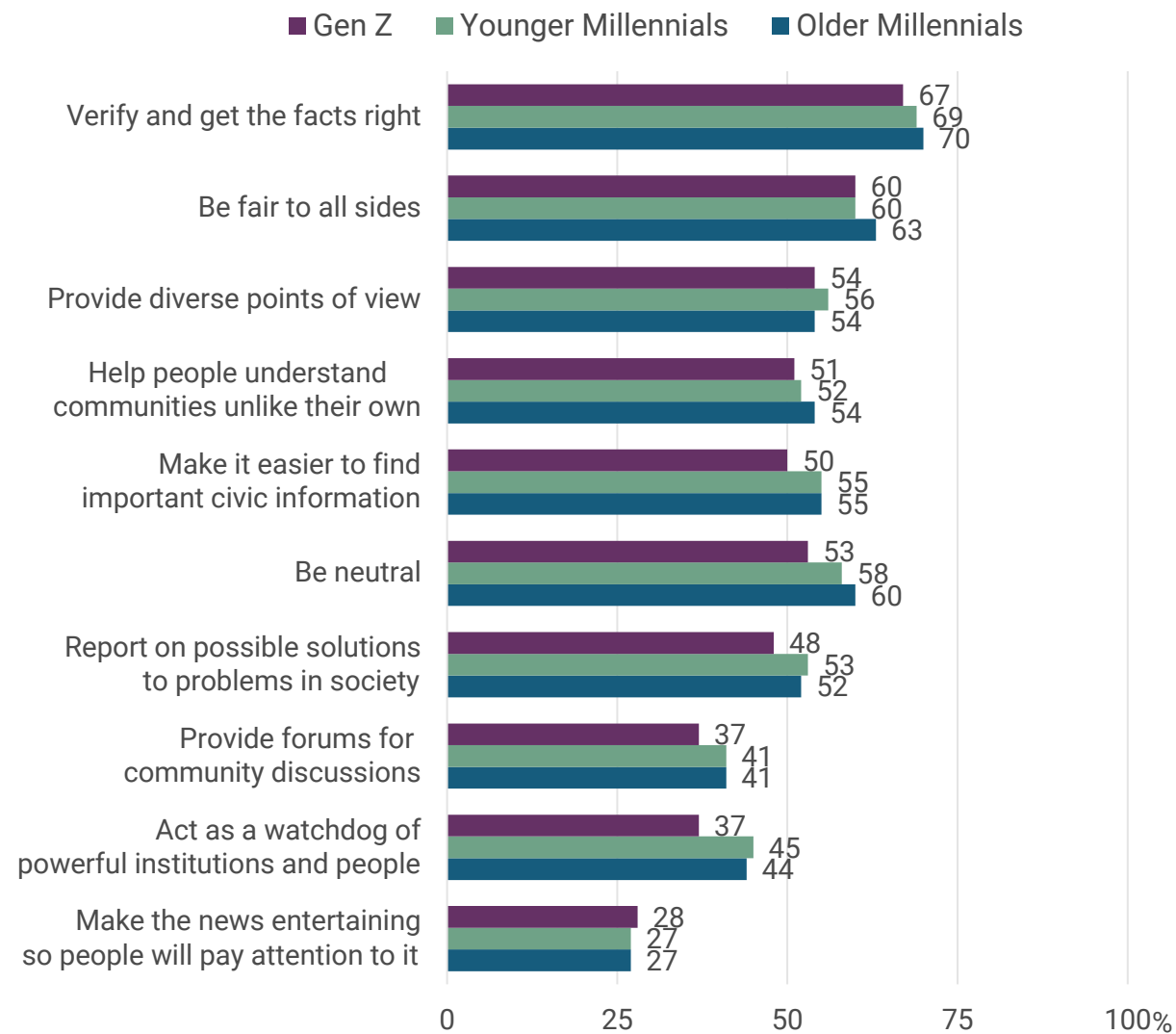
**Question:** How important do you think each of the following is for the news media to try to do?

**Source:** AP-NORC polls conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40 and January 5 through February 2, 2015, with 1,045 respondents ages 18 to 34 nationwide.

We also find differences within the Gen Z and Millennial populations, which we will explore more deeply in subsequent reports. For instance, older Millennials are more likely than Gen Z to value the news media's neutrality (60% vs. 53%). Yet, on many measures, Gen Z is less likely to consider it very or extremely important.

## Neutrality of the news media is more important to older Millennials than Gen Z.

Percent of Americans ages 16 to 40 who say very or extremely important



**Question:** How important do you think each of the following is important for the news media to try to do?

**Source:** AP-NORC poll conducted May 18 to June 8, 2022, with 5,975 respondents ages 16 to 40 nationwide.



APNORC.org

## STUDY 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 funded by API. Staff from API, NORC at the University of Chicago, and AP collaborated on all aspects of the study.

Data were collected using both probability and non-probability sample sources. Interviews for this survey were conducted from May 18 through June 8, 2022, with people ages 16 to 40 representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The probability sample source is the AmeriSpeak® Panel, NORC's probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. During the initial recruitment phase of the panel, randomly selected U.S. households were sampled with a known, nonzero probability of selection from the NORC National Sample Frame and then contacted by U.S. mail, email, telephone, and field interviewers (face-to-face). The panel provides sample coverage of approximately 97 percent of the U.S. household population. Those excluded from the sample include people with P.O. box-only addresses, some addresses not listed in the USPS Delivery Sequence File, and some newly constructed dwellings.

Adult panel members ages 18 to 40 were randomly drawn from AmeriSpeak, and 1,947 completed the survey – 1,941 via the web and 6 via telephone. Teen panel members ages 16 to 17 were drawn from AmeriSpeak Teen, and 202 completed the survey – 200 via the web and 2 via telephone. Interviews were conducted in both English and Spanish, depending on respondent preference. Respondents were offered a small monetary incentive (\$3) for completing the survey. The final stage completion rate is 24 percent, the weighted household panel response rate is 24 percent, and the weighted household panel retention rate is 77.4 percent, for a cumulative response rate of 3.5 percent.

Lucid provided 3,826 non-probability interviews with people ages 16 to 40. The non-probability sample was derived based on quotas related to age, race and ethnicity, gender, and education. Interviews were conducted in English and via the web only. For panel recruitment, Lucid uses invitations of all types including email invitations, phone alerts, banners, and messaging on panel community sites to include people with a diversity of motivations to take part in research. Because non-probability panels do not start with a frame where there is known probability of selection, standard measures of sampling error and response rates cannot be calculated.

Quality assurance checks were conducted to ensure data quality. In total, 237 interviews were removed for nonresponse to at least 50% of the questions asked of them, for completing the survey in less than one-third the median interview time for the full sample, or for straight-lining all grid questions asked of them. These interviews were excluded from the data file prior to weighting.

Once the sample has been selected and fielded, and all the study data have been collected and made final, a raking process is used to adjust for any survey nonresponse in the probability sample, as well as any noncoverage or under and oversampling in both probability and non-probability samples resulting from the study specific sample design. Raking variables for both the probability and nonprobability samples included age by gender, age by Census region, age by race/ethnicity, and age by education. Population control totals for the raking variables were obtained from the 2021 Current Population Survey. The weighted data reflect the U.S. population of people ages 16 to 40.

To incorporate the nonprobability sample, NORC used TrueNorth calibration, an innovative hybrid calibration approach developed at NORC based on small area estimation methods in order to explicitly account for potential bias associated with the nonprobability sample. The purpose of TrueNorth calibration is to adjust the weights for the nonprobability sample to bring weighted distributions of the nonprobability sample in line with the population distribution for characteristics correlated with the survey variables. Such calibration adjustments help to reduce potential bias, yielding more accurate population estimates.

The weighted AmeriSpeak sample and the calibrated nonprobability sample were used to develop a small area model to support domain-level estimates, where the domains were defined by race/ethnicity, age, and gender. The dependent variables for the models were:

- Q1: In a typical day about how many hours do you spend online?
- Q24A: How concerned are you about each of the following? I have spread misinformation, even unintentionally
- Q18: Choose the statement that best describes you, even if it is not exactly right. In general, I actively seek out news and information or I mostly bump into news and information as I do other things or hear about it from others
- Q27B: As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them? Local news media

These were found to be key survey variables, in terms of model fit. The model included covariates, domain-level random effects, and sampling errors. The covariates were external data available from other national surveys such as health insurance, internet access, voting behavior, and housing type from the American Community Survey (ACS) or the Current Population Survey (CPS).

Finally, the combined AmeriSpeak and nonprobability sample weights were derived such that for the combined sample, the weighted estimate reproduced the small domain estimates (derived using the small area model) for key survey variables.

The overall margin of error for the combined sample is +/- 1.7 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups.

Sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error and there may be other unmeasured error in this or any other survey.

Complete questions and results are available at [www.mediainsight.org](http://www.mediainsight.org).

Additional information on the TrueNorth approach can be found here:

<https://amerispeak.norc.org/our-capabilities/Pages/TrueNorth.aspx>.

Details about the Media Insight Project can be found at: [www.mediainsight.org](http://www.mediainsight.org).

For more information, please email [info@apnorc.org](mailto:info@apnorc.org).

## ABOUT THE MEDIA INSIGHT PROJECT

The Media Insight Project is a collaboration between 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 the American Press Institute, NORC at the University of Chicago, and The Associated Press. <http://www.mediainsight.org/>

## ABOUT THE AMERICAN PRESS INSTITUTE

The American Press Institute advances an innovative and sustainable news industry by helping publishers understand and engage audiences, grow revenue, improve public-service journalism, and succeed at organizational change. We believe that for democracies to thrive, people need accurate news and information about their communities, the problems of civil society and the debates over how to solve them. That requires an economically sustainable free press that reflects the diversity of American society and understands the needs of its communities. API is a national 501(c)3 nonprofit educational organization affiliated with the News Media Alliance. <http://www.pressinstitute.org>

## ABOUT THE ASSOCIATED PRESS-NORC CENTER FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS RESEARCH

Celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, 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 an independent global news organization dedicated to factual reporting. Founded in 1846, AP today remains the most trusted source of fast, accurate, unbiased news in all formats and the essential provider of the technology and services vital to the news business. More than half the world's population sees AP journalism every day. [www.ap.org](http://www.ap.org)
- NORC at the University of Chicago is one of the oldest objective and nonpartisan research institutions in the world. [www.norc.org](http://www.norc.org)

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. In its 10 years, The AP-NORC Center has conducted more than 250 studies exploring the critical issues facing the public, covering topics like health care, the economy, COVID-19, trust in media, and more. Learn more at [www.apnorc.org](http://www.apnorc.org).