



Inside Track

Social Media Overtakes Print Newspapers as Americans' Source of News

The results of a Pew Research Center study show that “social media sites have surpassed print newspapers as a news source for Americans,” with 20 percent of U.S. adults turning to Facebook, Twitter, and similar sites as their source of information about what is going on in the world.

The study was based on a survey conducted by Pew between July 30 and August 12, 2018 and shows that television — still leading the pack — saw a decline from 57 percent in 2016 to 49 percent in 2018. News websites come in second, with an increase from 28 percent in 2016 to 33 percent in 2018. Radio held fairly steady with a one-point increase, from 25 percent to 26 percent. Print newspapers — which slid from 20 percent to 16 percent — trail behind the pack.

But those numbers alone don't tell the whole story, because when the ages of the survey respondents are taken into account, it becomes apparent that the younger the people, the more likely they are to look to social media for their news. In fact, those 18 to 29 eschew print newspapers (a mere two percent), radio (13 percent), and television (16 percent) in favor of news websites (27 percent) and social media (a whopping 36 percent).

Social-media giants such as Facebook, Twitter, and others routinely filter and manipulate what data is available to users on their platforms. Consequently, a large percentage of those 18 to 29 are being spoon-fed a very controlled diet where knowledge of the goings-on in the world around them is concerned.

On the other hand, those same younger people gather news from a wider variety of sources than do their elders. As the Pew study explains: “Younger Americans are also unique in that they don't rely on one platform in the way that the majority of their elders rely on TV. No more than half of those ages 18 to 29 and 30 to 49 get news often from any one news platform.”

Congressman: Abolish U.S. Senate So Big Cities Can Get Their Way

Calling it “downright dangerous” and “antiquated,” the man who served for the longest stretch in the U.S. House of Representatives is calling for the abolition of the U.S. Senate.

Former congressman John D. Dingell (D-Mich.) penned an opinion piece published December 4 in *The Atlantic* wherein he offered many ideas that he believes would “help restore confidence and trust in our precious system of government.” Among his “suggestions” is the abolition of the U.S. Senate.

“California has almost 40 million people, while the 20 smallest states have a combined population totaling less than that. Yet because of an 18th-century political deal, those 20 states have 40 senators, while California has just two. These sparsely populated, usually conservative states can block legislation supported by a majority of the American people. That's just plain crazy,” Dingell writes.

Dingell then goes on to bemoan the fact that “good bills” that pass the House of Representatives go on to “die a quiet death in the Senate because of the disproportionate influence of small states.” The



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legislative logjam lamented by Dingell is the result, he insists, of “the specific constitutional protection granted these small states.”

Well, he got that part right at least. The U.S. Senate was created by the states in the U.S. Constitution to perform the very function John Dingell thinks is blocking bills from becoming laws, bills that he reminds the reader “make it through the hyper-partisan House.”

Ironically, the very “obstruction” that Dingell derides is the very reason the Senate was created in the first place!

Although John Dingell — a self-described “armchair activist” — would prefer a system whereby he and those of his politically progressive bent could use their numerical advantage in the megalopolises on the East and West coasts to deprive of their liberty those living in smaller cities and in the remaining rural regions, our Constitution places the “weight” of the Senate on the scales of legislative justice for the express purpose of preventing such sectional suppression.

“Wage Gap” Caused by Work Choices, Not Sexism

A new study by two Harvard University economists and released November 28 shows that the “gender wage gap” can be completely explained by the different choices male and female employees make.

The study, by Valentin Bolotnyy and Natalia Emanuel, examined wage differences between male and female bus and train operators working for the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) during the 2011-2017 period. This was an ideal environment for the study because the union contract covering all these employees is rigidly structured to eliminate practically all subjectivity on the part of MBTA management. All employees receive the same training and start at the same wages. Thereafter, wage increases, promotions, and other benefits are doled out on the basis of seniority, with little managerial discretion allowed. Seniority also is the sole determinant of an employee’s work opportunities, including choice of schedules, routes, vacation days, and overtime hours.

Under such a contract, one would expect men and women to earn about the same amount, yet the researchers found that female MBTA operators still took home only 89 cents for every dollar that male operators made. The short explanation: “Men take 48% fewer unpaid hours off and work 83% more overtime hours per year than women.” Overtime is a major contributor to the wage gap. Men and women take roughly the same amount of overtime when hours are scheduled in advance, but when hours are scheduled the day of or the day before the shift, men take nearly twice as many hours as women.

“We see women prioritizing schedule convenience more than men in other respects,” they wrote. “As operators move up the seniority ladder and consequently have a greater pool of schedules to pick from, women move away from working weekends, holidays, and split shifts more than men. Women are more likely than men to take less desirable routes ... to avoid the less preferable schedules.”

Economist John Phelan summed things up best: “The ‘gender wage gap’ is as real as unicorns and has been killed more times than [*Halloween* character] Michael Myers.”

Putin: New Weapons Do Not Violate INF Treaty

Speaking during a December 18 meeting with top military staff in the Russian Defense Ministry’s headquarters in Moscow, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Russia’s new weapons have no



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foreign equivalents and will help ensure the country's security for decades to come.

During his talk, Putin specifically mentioned two new weapons — the Kinzhal hypersonic missile and the Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle. He said they have significantly strengthened Russia's military capability.

The Kinzhal, which can be launched from Tu-22M3 bombers or MiG-31K interceptors, is designed to target U.S. and NATO warships posing a threat to strategic missile systems in Russia's European sector and to destroy NATO missile-defense systems, including the MIM-104 Patriot, the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense, and the Aegis Combat System.

Shoigu said the Avangard will enter service with the military next year. Also known as Objekt 4202, Yu-71, and Yu-74, Avangard is a "scramjet" hypersonic glide vehicle that can be carried as a MIRV payload by several heavy ICBMs. It can deliver both nuclear and conventional payloads. The Avangard is capable of accelerating to up to Mach 20 when approaching a target, and is capable of sharp high-speed evasive maneuvers to evade missile-defense systems.

During the meeting, Putin also rejected the U.S. claim that Russia has developed a new land-based cruise missile in violation of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF). Putin asserted that Russia has no need for such a land-based weapon because it already has similar missiles on its ships and aircraft.

The United States warned December 4 that it would suspend its obligations under the INF in 60 days if Russia did not return to full compliance. The United States claims that Russia's 9M729 cruise missile violates the INF, which bans all land-based cruise and ballistic missiles with a range of 300 to 3,400 miles. Russia denies this.

Putin said the Russian military has successfully tested air-launched Kh-101 and sea-launched Kalibr cruise missiles with a range of 4,500 kilometers (2,790 miles) in combat in Syria. "It has probably made our partners worry, but it doesn't violate the INF treaty," Putin maintained.



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