



Written by [C. Mitchell Shaw](#) on December 12, 2018

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 — has seen 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.

As the Pew study states:

Social media sites have surpassed print newspapers as a news source for Americans: One-in-five U.S. adults say they often get news via social media, slightly higher than the share who often do so from print newspapers (16%) for the first time since Pew Research Center began asking these questions. In 2017, the portion who got news via social media was about equal to the portion who got news from print newspapers.

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 person, the more likely they are to look to social 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).

Those numbers shift a bit for the 30 to 49 crowd, with television (36 percent) and news websites (42 percent) running out ahead of radio (which still holds its own at 29 percent) and social media (22 percent). Print newspapers limp across the finish line only slightly better than with the younger crowd at a paltry eight percent.

As the age of the respondent goes up, the numbers invert even further, with respondents leaning more heavily on television (65 percent for the 50-to-64 crowd and an amazingly high 81 percent of those 65 and older). Even at that, though, social media comes in close to print newspapers for those 50 to 64 at 14 percent. Only the senior group sees print newspapers holding the second place at 39 percent.





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As the study notes:

News diets differ drastically for younger and older Americans. Age gaps that have [long been notable](#) have now widened substantially, with those 65 and older five times as likely as 18- to 29-year-olds to often get news from TV. A large majority of those 65 and older (81%) get news from television often, as do about two-thirds (65%) of those 50 to 64. Far fewer young Americans are turning to television news, however — only 16% of those 18 to 29 and 36% of those 30 to 49 get news often from television.

The age divide is nearly as large for social media, but in the other direction: Those 18 to 29 are about four times as likely to often get news there as those 65 and older.

Print's popularity only persists among those 65 and older. Among the oldest age group, about four-in-ten (39%) get news there often, but no more than 18% of any other age group do.

There is reason for concern with 36 percent of respondents between 18 and 29 saying they “often” get their news from social media. As *The New American* has often reported, 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 are 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.”

It is not surprising that younger people — who grew up with the Internet — turn to online sources (whether social media or news websites) for information. It is similar to the way many seniors turn to television; One tends to be more comfortable staying in the room where one entered the building. The Pew study also states, “For the first time, we also asked respondents if they got news from a streaming device on their TV — 9% of U.S. adults said that they do so often.”

It may well be that in a few years, the number of respondents who say they “often” get their news from streaming devices will increase and overtake other categories. One thing seems certain: With the decline of print newspapers as a source for all but the oldest respondents, that medium will likely vanish altogether in the near future.

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