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Friends and Family – Important Drivers of News

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RECOMMENDED CITATION

Pew Research Center, March, 2013, “Friends and Family – Important Drivers of News”

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Friends and Family – Important Drivers of News

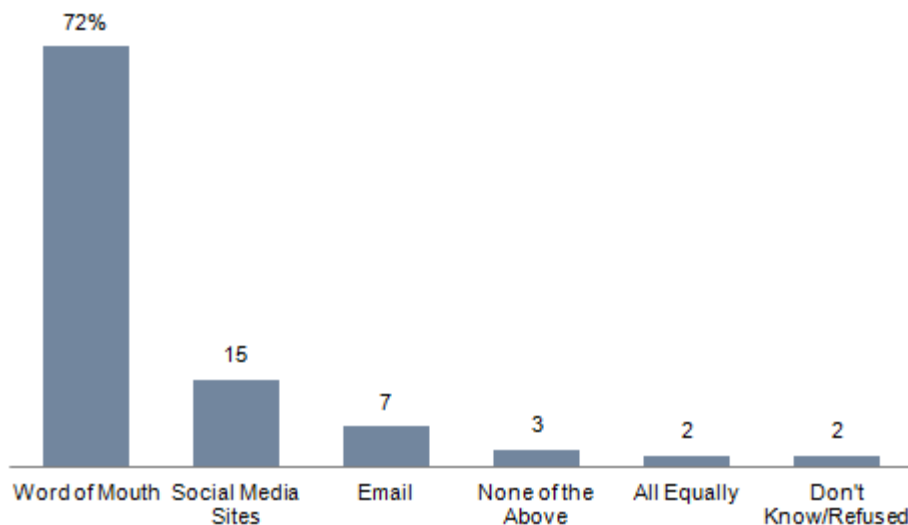
When they hear about news events from friends and family, the vast majority of people seek out full news stories to learn more, according to a new survey by the Pew Research Center.

People most often receive news from friends and relatives the old-fashioned way: word of mouth. But significant percentages of people now get most of this news through email and social networks, and they follow up even more often than those who receive news in conversation.

According to the 2013 survey of more than 2,000 U.S. adults, nearly three-quarters—72%—say the most common way they hear about news events from family and friends is by talking in person or over the phone. But 15% get most news from family and friends through social media sites. And that rises to nearly a quarter among 18-25 year olds. Seven percent do so via email.

Word of Mouth Is the Most Common Way People Get News From Friends and Family

Percentage of U.S. Adults



N=2009

Question: Many people get some of their news of the day from friends and family. When family or friends share a news story with you, what is the most common way they share it?

Note: Numbers are rounded and may not add up to 100.

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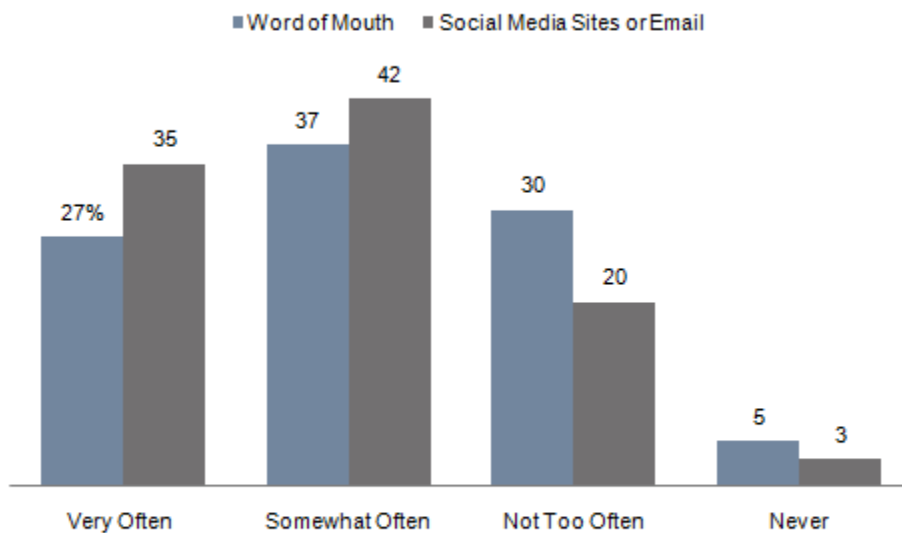
Even more striking is the proportion of people who then go an extra step to get more information. Nearly two-thirds of those who get news from family and friends chiefly through conversation

“often” or “very often” seek out a news story to learn more. The 22% of respondents who primarily receive news from family and friends electronically seek out news stories at an even higher rate. Fully 77% said they followed up at least somewhat often, more than three times the 23% who rarely or never followed up.

Those electronic shares, then, may be a good way for news outlets to expand their audience.

After Getting News Tips From Friends & Family, Most Americans Seek Out Full News Stories

Percentage of U.S. Adults Who Get Most News from Friends and Family by...



Those Who Get News via Word of Mouth N=720 and via Social Media Sites or Email N=256

Note: Numbers are rounded and may not add up to 100.

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The gap between acting on a digital news tip or a conversational one makes sense: It is easier and faster to click on a link that is literally at your fingertips than it is to find a story in a newspaper, which you may or may not have at your disposal, wait for a story to air on television or the radio or even conduct a search and weed through options on the internet.

What’s more, the practice of sharing news electronically may well increase in coming years as digital and mobile platforms continue to reach broader segments of the population.

Younger adults already are relying more heavily on social networks for news from friends and family. While traditional word of mouth is still the most common way they get this news, nearly a quarter (23%) receive most of their news from friends and family through social networks.

College graduates and those with higher household incomes are more likely to get most of their news from friends and family electronically, though with more of a mix between social networks and email. Fully a third of college graduates gets most of the friend and family news this way (19% through social media and 14% via email), as do 31% of those earning more than \$75,000 per year (18% through social media and 13% via email). Only 16% of people who didn't attend college at all received news from relatives or friends electronically, primarily through social media.

Democrats and independents were slightly more reliant on social networking than their Republican counterparts, receiving news from family and friends through social media 17% of the time, compared to 12% for members of the GOP.

Demographics: How People Get Most News from Friends and Family

Percentage of U.S. Adults

	Word of Mouth	Email	Social Media Sites
Age			
18-29 years	70%	3%	23%
30-49 years	70	7	20
50-64 years	75	10	9
65+	73	8	6
Education			
College Education	62	14	19
Some College Education	74	6	17
≤ High School Education	77	4	12
Income			
< \$30,000	72	4	16
\$30-49,900	77	6	14
\$50-74,900	74	7	15
\$75,000 or more	66	13	18
Party Identification			
Republican	75	8	12
Democrat	72	6	17
Independent	70	8	17
Geography			
Northeast Region	72	7	16
Midwest Region	76	7	12
South	71	8	15
West	68	7	19

N=2009

Note: Those who refused to respond or answered don't know, are not included here.

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When it came to following up on news they heard in conversation with relatives and friends, college graduates were most likely to do so very or somewhat often, at 72%, compared to 65% of people who attended some college and 58% of people who did not attend college at all. Women were more likely than men to follow up very or somewhat often, at a rate of 67% vs. 59%.

The people most likely to search out more about a story they came upon in emails or through social networking were those who earned \$50,000 to just under \$75,000 a year. Nine out of 10 of them said they followed up somewhat or very often. But even people who earned less than \$30,000 a year – who followed up less than those in all other income categories – did so at 69%.

Demographics: Who Is More Likely To Follow Up with Full News Stories

Percentage of those Who Get Most News From Friends & Family each way and at least somewhat follow up with full news stories...

	Word of Mouth	Email or Social Media Sites
Gender		
Female	67%	83%
Male	59	71
Age		
18-29 years	64	82
30-49 years	65	86
50-64 years	66	65
65+	59	61
Education		
College Education	72	79
Some College Education	65	79
≤ High School Education	58	71
Income		
< \$30,000	63	69
\$30-49,900	58	72
\$50-74,900	67	90
\$75,000 or more	66	79
Party Identification		
Republican	66	79
Democrat	63	76
Independent	60	76
Geography		
Northeast Region	65	68
Midwest Region	62	61
South	60	83
West	68	86

Those Who Get News via Word of Mouth N=720 and via Online N=256

Note: Those who refused to respond or answered don't know, are not included here.

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Again, women followed up on electronic news more than men. Forty-one percent of women said they clicked on a link or sought out more information “very often,” compared to 29% of men. Both men and women said they followed up “somewhat often” at the rate of 42%.

People who live in the West – home of the Silicon Valley—followed up on electronic news more than people in other regions. More than half (55%) of Westerners sought out additional information “very often,” more than three times as often as Midwesterners, who did so 17% of the time.

The survey results could be heartening to news outlets. They show, first and foremost, that most people are interested in the news they receive from family and friends, and curious enough about it to seek out more details. Further they demonstrate that the growth of electronic communication—via email and, to an even greater extent, social networking – may make it easier and more likely for people to follow up on news in the future.

Methodology

The PSRAI January Week 4 and February Week 1 2013 Omnibus Polls obtained telephone interviews with a nationally representative sample of 2,009 adults living in the continental United States. Telephone interviews were conducted by landline (1,003) and cell phone (1,006, including 512 without a landline phone). The surveys were conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International (PSRAI). Interviews were done in English by Princeton Data Source from January 24 to 27 and February 7 to 10, 2013. Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is ± 2.5 percentage points.

**Pew Research Center
2013 Friends and Family – Important Driver of News**

January-February 2013

N=2,009 adults

ASK ALL:

Q.1 Many people get some of their news of the day from friends and family. When family or friends share a news story with you, what is the most common way they share it? Do they mostly share it with you... [READ AND RANDOMIZE 1-3]

By talking to you either in person or by phone	72%
Through email	7
Through social media sites	15
None of the above (VOL.)	3
All equally (VOL.)	2
Don't know	1
Refused	1

ASK IF Q1 = 1**BASED ON THOSE WHO GET NEWS FROM FRIENDS/FAMILY BY TALKING (FEB 7-10 ONLY) [N=720]:**

Q2. When friends and family share news by TALKING TO YOU, how often do you then seek out a news story about what you heard? [READ 1-4]

Very often	27%
Somewhat often	37
Not too often	30
Never	5
Don't know	*
Refused	1
NET Very/Somewhat often	63
NET Not too often/never	36

ASK IF Q1 = 2 OR 3**BASED ON THOSE WHO GET NEWS FROM FRIENDS/FAMILY THROUGH EMAIL OR SOCIAL MEDIA (FEB 7-10 ONLY) [N=256]:**

Q3. When friends and family share news through EMAIL OR SOCIAL NETWORKS, how often do you then follow a link to a news story or seek out more about the story? [READ 1-4]

Very often	35%
Somewhat often	42
Not too often	20
Never	3
Don't know	*
Refused	-
NET Very/Somewhat often	77
NET Not too often/never	23