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Older Americans, Black Adults and Americans With Less Education More Interested in Local News

These groups also prefer to get local news on TV

BY *Michael Barthel, Elizabeth Grieco and Elisa Shearer*

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Older Americans, Black Adults and Americans With Less Education More Interested in Local News

These groups also prefer to get local news on TV

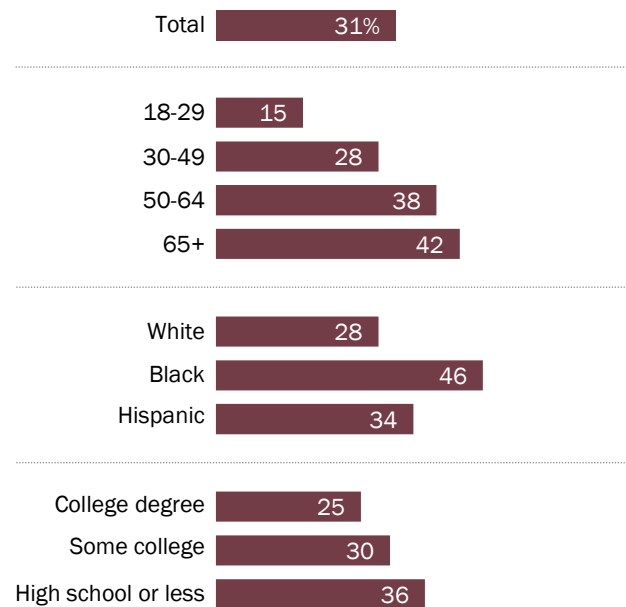
Nearly a third of U.S. adults (31%) follow local news very closely, but local news does not play an equally vital role for all Americans. Older Americans, black adults and those with a high school education or less show considerably more interest in local news than their counterparts, according to a new analysis from Pew Research Center. These same groups prefer getting their local news via the TV rather than online.

This new analysis of demographic differences in Americans' local news habits and attitudes builds off [a landmark report](#) on the state of local news in the U.S., which surveyed nearly 35,000 adults between Oct. 15-Nov. 8, 2018, on the Center's American Trends Panel and Ipsos's KnowledgePanel.¹ Detailed tables showing demographic breakdowns for questions included in the survey are available as [an appendix](#). The data is [also available to download](#).

Relatively few Americans ages 18 to 29 (15%) follow local news very closely, compared with about three-in-ten (28%) of those 30 to 49 and about four-in-ten (39%) of those 50 and older. Black Americans show a stronger connection to local news: Just under half (46%) follow it very closely, while about a quarter (28%) of white Americans do the same, along with about a third (34%) of Hispanic adults. And about a third of

Older Americans, black adults and Americans with less education are more interested in local news

% of U.S. adults who follow local news "very closely"



Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics; Hispanics can be of any race.

Source: Survey conducted Oct. 15-Nov. 8, 2018.

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¹ In addition to this look at how local news habits and attitudes differ based on individual characteristics, the [initial report](#) examined how the characteristics of the community where someone lives – such as differences between those living in areas with higher or lower black populations or higher or lower median income – might influence their local news habits and attitudes.

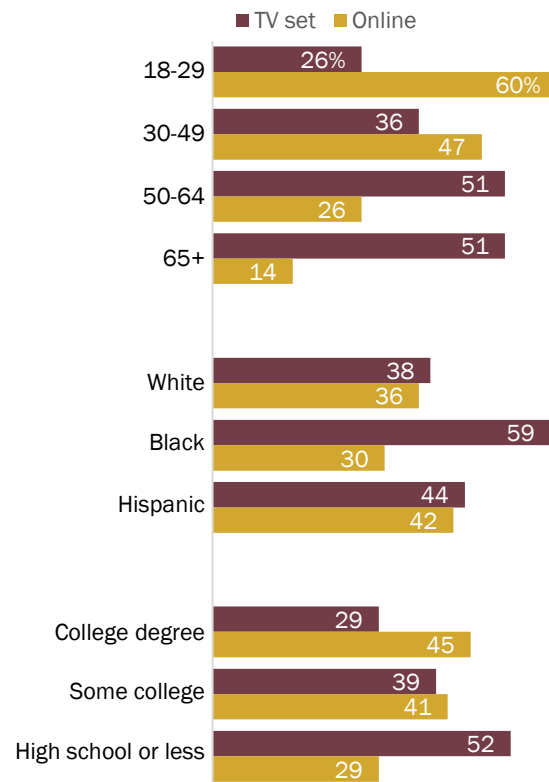
Americans with a high school diploma or less education (36%) are very interested in local news, more so than those who have attended some college (30%) or received a college degree (25%).

Additionally, there are large differences by age in how Americans prefer to get local news. Those ages 50 and older primarily turn to the TV set, while those younger than 50 mostly prefer online pathways to local news. Black Americans and those with a high school diploma or less education also express a far greater preference than their counterparts for getting local news through the TV set rather than online, in print or on the radio. For example, about half of those with a high school diploma or less prefer the TV set (52%) compared with 29% of those with a college degree and 39% of those with some college education.

Those groups who are less likely to prefer TV tend to express a greater preference for the internet. For instance, 60% of those ages 18 to 29 prefer the internet, along with about half of 30- to 49-year-olds (47%).

Some groups are far more likely to prefer TV as their pathway to local news

% of U.S. adults who prefer to get their local news via ...



Note: Respondents who said "print" or "radio" are not shown here. "Online" includes both social media and news websites/apps. Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics; Hispanics can be of any race.

Source: Survey conducted Oct. 15-Nov. 8, 2018.

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When turning to online pathways to local news, most U.S. adults prefer news websites (23%) to social media (15%), but there are some exceptions. For instance, 18- to 29-year-olds are about evenly split between their preference for social media and news websites and apps. The remaining age groups, on the other hand, are more likely to use websites than social media for local news.

Blacks and Hispanics are about evenly split in their preference for social media and news websites, while white adults show a greater preference for websites over social media when accessing local news. Those with a high school diploma or less also equally prefer social media and websites, while those with a college degree prefer websites.

Different preferences for social media, websites in accessing local news

% of U.S. adults who prefer to get their local news via ...

	Social media	News websites
18-29	32%	28%
30-49	17	30
50-64	7	19
65+	3	11
White	12	24
Black	15	15
Hispanic	22	20
College degree	12	33
Some college	18	23
High school or less	14	14

Note: Respondents who said “TV,” “print” or “radio” are not shown here. News websites also includes news apps. Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics; Hispanics can be of any race. Source: Survey conducted Oct. 15-Nov. 8, 2018.

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Younger Americans are less likely to financially support local news, more likely to say they're not interested in it

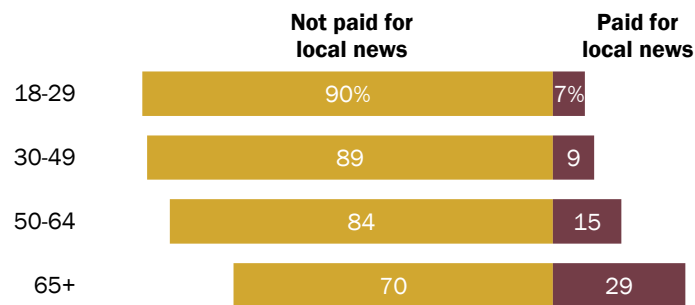
Overall, very few U.S. adults (14%) pay for local news. This is especially true for the two youngest **age groups** – only 7% of those ages 18 to 29 and 9% of those 30 to 49 do so. By comparison, larger portions of those ages 50 to 64 (15%) and 65 and older (29%) have paid a local news organization – by either subscribing, donating or becoming a member – but they are still a minority.

The most common reason Americans give for not paying is that plenty of local news is available for free – about half or more among all but the youngest adults say so.

Those ages 18 to 29, however, are more evenly divided between not paying for local news because of the availability of free content and the fact that they aren't interested enough to pay for it. About four-in-ten (38%) say they don't find local news interesting enough to pay for, about the same share say they can find plenty of free local news (37%). Smaller proportions of those 30 and older say their lack of interest is the reason they don't pay.

Younger Americans less likely to pay for local news

% of U.S. adults who have ___ in the past year



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey conducted Oct. 15-Nov. 8, 2018.

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Younger Americans more likely than older adults to say they don't pay for local news due to lack of interest

Among those who don't pay for local news, % who say the main reason they don't pay is ...

	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
	%	%	%	%
They can find plenty of free local news so they don't need to pay for it	37	49	54	58
They are not interested enough in local news to pay for it	38	27	21	17
It's too expensive	14	12	12	11
The news provided is not good enough to pay for	9	9	10	11

Source: Survey conducted Oct. 15-Nov. 8, 2018.

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Black, Hispanic Americans see many local news topics as more important for their daily lives than do white Americans

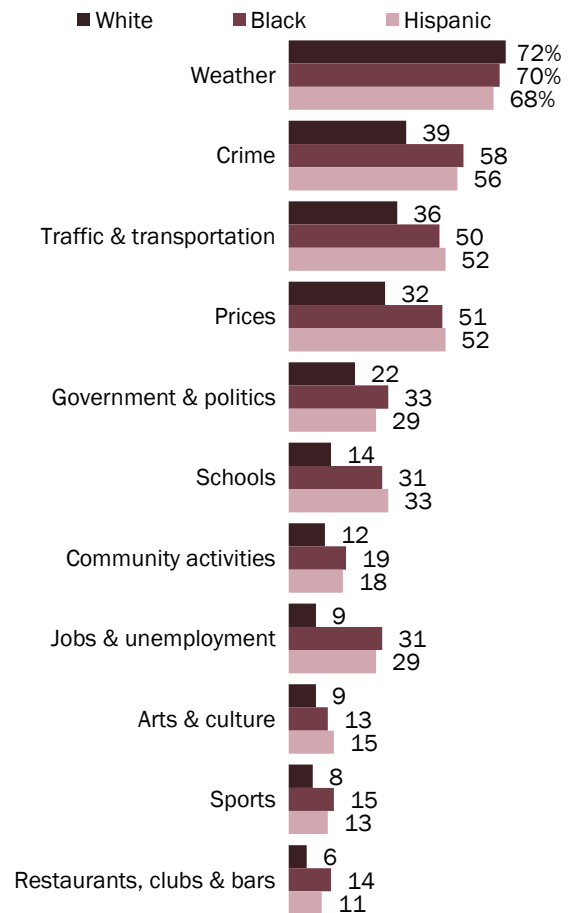
Black and Hispanic Americans are more likely than white Americans to say eight of the 11 local news topics asked about in the survey are important to know about for daily life. For five of the topics, the differences are substantial: jobs, prices, crime, schools, and traffic and transportation.

Black and Hispanic adults are about three times as likely as white adults to say jobs and unemployment are important to be informed about for their daily lives, and they are about twice as likely or more to say this about local schools and school events. Black and Hispanic Americans are also much more likely than whites to say this about prices for local goods and services, crime, and traffic and transportation.

Weather is the one topic where all Americans show equal interest. Roughly seven-in-ten whites, blacks and Hispanics say it is important for their daily lives.

Black and Hispanic Americans are more likely than whites to say many local news topics are important for daily life

% of U.S. adults who say each local news topic is important for daily life



Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics; Hispanics can be of any race.

Source: Survey conducted Oct. 15-Nov. 8, 2018.

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Those with a high school diploma or less give their local news media lower marks for community connection

U.S. adults with a high school diploma or less education give their local news media lower marks on three measures of community connection than those [with a college degree](#).

When asked if they thought local journalists were in touch with their community, just over half of those with a high school education or less (57%) say they are in touch, compared with nearly three-quarters of those with a college degree (72%) and about two thirds of those with some college (64%).

The differences by education are smaller on the question of whether the local news media cover the area where they live: about half of those with a high school education or less (48%) and with some college (50%), compared with 55% of those with a college degree.

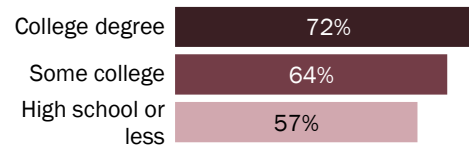
And those Americans with a high school diploma or less are about half as likely as those with a college degree to have spoken with a local journalist. Only 14% of those with a high school diploma or less have done so, compared with 23% of those with some college education and 27% of those with a college degree.

There are no differences by education in the marks they give local media on seven [core job functions](#).

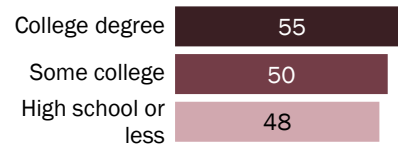
Those with a high school diploma or less education see local news media as less connected to their community

% of U.S. adults who say ...

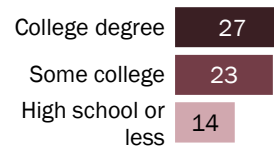
Local journalists are in touch with the community



Local news media mostly cover the area where you live



They have spoken with a local journalist



Source: Survey conducted Oct. 15-Nov. 8, 2018.

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Appendix: Detailed tables by demographic group

The tables below show how Americans responded to selected questions from the survey.

Age

Local media attitudes and job ratings, by age

Among U.S. adults ages ...

	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
	%	%	%	%
<i>% who follow ____ very closely</i>				
National news	15	25	36	49
Local news	15	28	38	42
<i>% who say ...</i>				
Local journalists are in touch with the community	57	63	66	67
Local news media have a lot of influence	33	39	38	38
Local news media mostly cover the area where you live	50	51	51	52
Local journalists should express their views on local issues	43	40	33	29
<i>% who say ...</i>				
They have spoken with a local journalist	17	19	23	25
They have paid for local news in the past year	7	9	15	29
<i>% who say their local news media do each of the following well</i>				
Report news accurately	69	71	73	71
Provide news that you use daily	58	68	72	67
Keep an eye on local political leaders	61	67	69	68
Cover news stories thoroughly	63	65	68	65
Are transparent about their reporting	59	63	65	61
Deal fairly with all sides	57	62	64	62
Include people like you in their stories	53	59	60	56

Source: Survey conducted Oct. 15-Nov. 8, 2018.

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Local news providers, pathways and digital preferences, by age

Among U.S. adults ages ...

	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
	%	%	%	%
<i>% who say ...</i>				
The internet is the most important way they get local news	43	39	25	17
Social media is the most important way they get local news	22	18	10	6
<i>% who often get local news from ...</i>				
News websites or apps	22	30	28	22
Social media	35	30	19	14
Among those who get local news online, % who primarily get it on mobile				
	63	62	44	30
<i>% who prefer to get their local news via ...</i>				
Print	7	7	14	28
Radio	7	9	9	6
TV	26	36	51	51
Social media	32	17	7	3
News website or app	28	30	19	11
<i>% who often get local news from each type of provider</i>				
TV stations	19	32	49	55
Daily newspapers	7	11	20	35
Non-daily newspapers	4	6	8	11
Radio stations	14	21	25	19
Newsletters or listservs	4	7	9	10
Local government agencies or officials	4	5	6	6
Local organizations	6	7	7	10
Online forums	11	15	11	8
Online-only sources	5	6	6	5

Source: Survey conducted Oct. 15-Nov. 8, 2018.

"Older Americans, Black Adults and Americans With Less Education More Interested in Local News"

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Local news topic interest and ease of access, by age

Among U.S. adults ages ...

	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+
	%	%	%	%
<i>% who say each local news topic is important for daily life</i>				
Weather	62	69	76	73
Crime	34	46	49	46
Traffic & transportation	38	45	44	31
Prices	35	38	39	37
Government & politics	19	24	26	28
Schools	17	31	15	8
Jobs & unemployment	18	20	15	5
Community activities	14	16	13	11
Arts & culture	12	12	9	8
Sports	9	11	10	8
Restaurants, clubs & bars	11	9	7	5
<i>% who say 5+ local news topics are important for daily life</i>	20	29	23	16

Among those who say each local news topic is important or interesting, % who say it is very easy to stay informed about it

Weather	73	76	78	78
Crime	35	38	38	36
Traffic & transportation	43	49	48	40
Prices	22	26	26	25
Government & politics	28	30	33	30
Schools	28	34	30	25
Jobs & unemployment	18	24	23	18
Community activities	25	29	29	29
Arts & culture	23	28	28	27
Sports	52	54	53	48
Restaurants, clubs & bars	28	30	29	24

Source: Survey conducted Oct. 15-Nov. 8, 2018.

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Race/ethnicity

Local media attitudes and job ratings, by race and ethnicity

Among U.S. adults who are ...

	White	Black	Hispanic
	%	%	%
<i>% who follow ____ very closely</i>			
National news	32	29	31
Local news	28	46	34
<i>% who say ...</i>			
Local journalists are in touch with the community	67	53	58
Local news media have a lot of influence	35	41	43
Local news media mostly cover the area where you live	50	55	50
Local journalists should express their views on local issues	29	49	56
<i>% who say ...</i>			
They have spoken with a local journalist	23	19	14
They have paid for local news in the past year	17	10	8
<i>% who say their local news media do each of the following well</i>			
Report news accurately	71	73	75
Provide news that you use daily	65	71	74
Keep an eye on local political leaders	66	69	67
Cover news stories thoroughly	64	70	71
Are transparent about their reporting	61	65	69
Deal fairly with all sides	60	63	69
Include people like you in their stories	58	56	61

Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics; Hispanics can be of any race.

Source: Survey conducted Oct. 15-Nov. 8, 2018.

"Older Americans, Black Adults and Americans With Less Education More Interested in Local News"

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Local news providers, pathways and digital preferences, by race and ethnicity

Among U.S. adults who are ...

	White	Black	Hispanic
	%	%	%
<i>% who say ...</i>			
The internet is the most important way they get local news	31	25	37
Social media is the most important way they get local news	12	16	22
<i>% who often get local news from ...</i>			
News websites or apps	27	27	24
Social media	22	28	34
Among those who get local news online, % who primarily get it on mobile			
	48	54	64
<i>% who prefer to get their local news via ...</i>			
Print	16	7	7
Radio	9	4	6
TV	38	59	44
Social media	12	15	22
News website or app	24	15	20
<i>% who often get local news from each type of provider</i>			
TV stations	38	52	37
Daily newspapers	20	18	12
Non-daily newspapers	7	8	5
Radio stations	21	21	20
Newsletters or listservs	7	9	8
Local government agencies or officials	5	9	6
Local organizations	7	12	8
Online forums	11	14	12
Online-only sources	5	7	6

Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics; Hispanics can be of any race.

Source: Survey conducted Oct. 15-Nov. 8, 2018.

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Local news topic interest and ease of access, by race and ethnicity

Among U.S. adults who are ...

	White	Black	Hispanic
	%	%	%
<i>% who say each local news topic is important for daily life</i>			
Weather	72	70	68
Crime	39	58	56
Traffic & transportation	36	50	52
Prices	32	51	52
Government & politics	22	33	29
Schools	14	31	33
Jobs & unemployment	9	31	29
Community activities	12	19	18
Arts & culture	9	13	15
Sports	8	15	13
Restaurants, clubs & bars	6	14	11
<i>% who say 5+ local news topics are important for daily life</i>	17	40	37

Among those who say each local news topic is important or interesting, % who say it is very easy to stay informed about it

Weather	79	75	70
Crime	35	52	37
Traffic & transportation	43	56	48
Prices	22	38	30
Government & politics	29	39	32
Schools	28	40	33
Jobs & unemployment	19	33	22
Community activities	28	35	25
Arts & culture	26	33	26
Sports	54	55	47
Restaurants, clubs & bars	26	35	32

Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics; Hispanics can be of any race.

Source: Survey conducted Oct. 15-Nov. 8, 2018.

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Education

Local media attitudes and job ratings, by education

Among U.S. adults whose highest level of education is ...

	High school or less	Some college	College degree or higher
	%	%	%
<i>% who follow ___ very closely</i>			
National news	26	28	40
Local news	36	30	25
<i>% who say ...</i>			
Local journalists are in touch with the community	57	64	72
Local news media have a lot of influence	36	37	38
Local news media mostly cover the area where you live	48	50	55
Local journalists should express their views on local issues	44	35	28
<i>% who say ...</i>			
They have spoken with a local journalist	14	23	27
They have paid for local news in the past year	10	13	22
<i>% who say their local news media do each of the following well</i>			
Report news accurately	72	69	73
Provide news that you use daily	69	66	65
Keep an eye on local political leaders	67	66	66
Cover news stories thoroughly	67	65	64
Are transparent about their reporting	63	61	62
Deal fairly with all sides	64	59	61
Include people like you in their stories	57	57	58

Source: Survey conducted Oct. 15-Nov. 8, 2018.

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Local news providers, pathways and digital preferences, by education

Among U.S. adults whose highest level of education is ...

	High school or less	Some college	College degree or higher
	%	%	%
<i>% who say ...</i>			
The internet is the most important way they get local news	23	34	40
Social media is the most important way they get local news	14	15	13
<i>% who often get local news from ...</i>			
News websites or apps	19	28	34
Social media	25	28	21
Among those who get local news online, % who primarily get it on mobile	53	53	48
<i>% who prefer to get their local news via ...</i>			
Print	12	11	16
Radio	6	8	10
TV	52	39	29
Social media	14	18	12
News website or app	14	23	33
<i>% who often get local news from each type of provider</i>			
TV stations	44	38	32
Daily newspapers	18	15	20
Non-daily newspapers	7	6	8
Radio stations	18	20	23
Newsletters or listservs	7	7	9
Local government agencies or officials	5	5	6
Local organizations	7	8	8
Online forums	10	13	13
Online-only sources	5	6	6

Source: Survey conducted Oct. 15-Nov. 8, 2018.

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Among U.S. adults whose highest level of education is ...

	High school or less	Some college	College degree or higher
	%	%	%
<i>% who say each local news topic is important for daily life</i>			
Weather	68	71	73
Crime	49	45	37
Traffic & transportation	39	42	43
Prices	43	38	29
Government & politics	22	24	27
Schools	21	18	18
Jobs & unemployment	18	15	11
Community activities	14	14	14
Arts & culture	9	10	12
Sports	11	9	10
Restaurants, clubs & bars	8	8	8

<i>% who say 5+ local news topics are important for daily life</i>	25	23	20
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Among those who say each local news topic is important or interesting, % who say it is very easy to stay informed about it

Weather	71	77	82
Crime	39	38	34
Traffic & transportation	43	47	48
Prices	30	25	19
Government & politics	32	31	28
Schools	33	30	27
Jobs & unemployment	24	22	18
Community activities	28	29	27
Arts & culture	26	27	28
Sports	49	53	56
Restaurants, clubs & bars	29	28	28

Source: Survey conducted Oct. 15-Nov. 8, 2018.

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Acknowledgments

This report was made possible by The Pew Charitable Trusts, which received support from the Google News Initiative.

About the Google News Initiative

The Google News Initiative is Google's effort to work with the news industry to help journalism thrive in the digital age. We work with thousands of news organizations to meet their business needs and industry challenges. Through our partnerships, programs and products, we aim to meet the needs of journalists and news organizations so they can succeed on the web. The Google News Initiative also conducts research on topics critical to the future of journalism and fosters innovation in the industry.

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This report is a collaborative effort based on the input and analysis of the following individuals. Find related reports online at journalism.org.

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Methodology

This report is based on a nationally representative Pew Research Center survey of 34,897 U.S. adults, conducted October 15–November 8, 2018, on both the Center’s American Trends Panel (ATP) and Ipsos’s KnowledgePanel. This report was made possible by The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Center’s primary funder, which received support from the Google News Initiative.

The ATP and KnowledgePanel are national probability-based online panels of U.S. adults. Panelists participate via self-administered web surveys. On both the ATP and KnowledgePanel, panelists who do not have internet access are provided with an internet connection and device that can be used to take surveys. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish. The ATP is managed by Ipsos.

All active ATP panel members were invited to participate in this survey. All members of the KnowledgePanel living in the 53 most populous CBSAs were invited to participate, while those in less populous CBSAs were sampled at a lower rate. Of the 34,897 respondents in total, 10,654 came from the ATP and 24,243 came from the KnowledgePanel.

The ATP was created in 2014, with the first cohort of panelists invited to join the panel at the end of a large, national, landline and cellphone random-digit-dial survey that was conducted in both English and Spanish. Two additional recruitments were conducted using the same method in 2015 and 2017, respectively. Across these three surveys, a total of 19,718 adults were invited to join the ATP, of which 9,942 agreed to participate.

In August 2018, the ATP switched from telephone to address-based recruitment. Invitations were sent to a random, address-based sample (ABS) of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service’s Delivery Sequence File. In each household, the adult with the next birthday was asked to go online to complete a survey, at the end of which they were invited to join the panel. For a random half-sample of invitations, households without internet access were instructed to return a postcard. These households were contacted by telephone and sent a tablet if they agreed to participate.

KnowledgePanel uses a combination of random-digit dialing (RDD) and address-based sampling (ABS) methodologies to recruit panel members (in 2009 KnowledgePanel switched its sampling methodology for recruiting members from RDD to ABS).

KnowledgePanel continually recruits new panel members throughout the year to offset panel attrition as people leave the panel.

Weighting

The data were weighted in a multistep process that begins with a base weight incorporating the respondents' original survey selection probability and the fact that in 2014 and 2017 some ATP respondents were subsampled for invitation to the panel. The next step in the weighting uses an iterative technique that aligns the sample to population benchmarks on the dimensions listed in the accompanying table.

A total of 34,897 panelists responded out of 62,757 who were sampled, for a response rate of 56%. The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 1.8%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 34,897 respondents is plus or minus 0.8 percentage points.

Sampling errors and statistical-significance tests take into account the effect of weighting. In addition to sampling error, one should bear in mind that question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

Weighting dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Gender	2016 American Community Survey
Age	
Education	
Race/Hispanic origin	2017 CPS March Metropolitan status Supplement
Hispanic nativity	
Home internet access	
Volunteerism	2015 CPS Volunteer Supplement
Voter registration	2016 CPS Voting and Registration Supplement
Party affiliation	Average of the three most recent Pew Research Center telephone surveys.

Note: Estimates from the ACS are based on non-institutionalized adults. Voter registration is calculated using procedures from Hur, Achen (2013) and rescaled to include the total US adult population. "Older Americans, Black Adults and Americans With Less Education More Interested in Local News"

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The following table shows the unweighted sample sizes and the error attributable to sampling that would be expected at the 95% level of confidence for different groups in the survey:

Group	Unweighted sample size	Plus or minus ...
Total sample	34,897	0.8 percentage points
<i>Age</i>		
Ages 18-29	2,851	2.9 percentage points
30-49	9,967	1.5 percentage points
50-64	11,163	1.5 percentage points
65+	10,911	1.5 percentage points
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>		
White, non-Hispanic	26,170	1.0 percentage points
Black, non-Hispanic	2,665	3.0 percentage points
Hispanic	4,108	2.4 percentage points
<i>Education</i>		
College degree	17,260	1.2 percentage points
Some college	11,368	1.4 percentage points
High school or less	6,251	1.9 percentage points

Sample sizes and sampling errors for other subgroups are available upon request.

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