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News on Twitter: Consumed by Most Users and Trusted by Many

Seven-in-ten U.S. adult Twitter news consumers have followed breaking news there

BY Amy Mitchell, Elisa Shearer and Galen Stocking

FOR MEDIA OR OTHER INQUIRIES:

Amy Mitchell, Director, Journalism Research
Elisa Shearer, Research Associate
Rachel Weisel, Senior Communications Manager
Andrew Grant, Communications Associate

202.419.4372

www.pewresearch.org

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This is the latest report in Pew Research Center's ongoing investigation of the state of news, information and journalism in the digital age, a research program funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, with generous support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

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How we did this

Pew Research Center conducted this study to gain insight into Twitter users' views, attitudes and behaviors on the site, and how those opinions might vary based on their news habits on the site. For this analysis, we surveyed 2,548 U.S. adult Twitter users in May 2021.

Everyone who took part in this survey is a member of the Center's American Trends Panel (ATP), an online survey panel that is recruited through national, random sampling of residential addresses. This way nearly all U.S. adults have a chance of selection. Read more about the [ATP's methodology](#).

This is the latest report in Pew Research Center's ongoing investigation of the state of news, information and journalism in the digital age, a research program funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, with generous support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

News on Twitter: Consumed by Most Users and Trusted by Many

Seven-in-ten U.S. adult Twitter news consumers have followed breaking news there

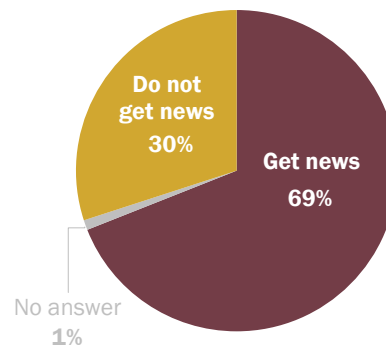
News plays a prominent role on Twitter. Overall, [23% of Americans use Twitter](#), and roughly seven-in-ten U.S. Twitter users (69%) say they get news on the site, according to a new Pew Research Center study that surveyed 2,548 Twitter users from May 17 to 31, 2021.

For most of these Twitter news consumers, the site is an important way they keep up with the news – but not the *most* important way. Just 8% of Twitter users who get news on the site say it is the *most* important way they get news, while an additional 59% say it is important but not paramount.

One key area of news people rely on Twitter for is breaking news. Fully 70% of Twitter news consumers say they have used Twitter to follow live news events, up from [59% who said this in 2015](#).

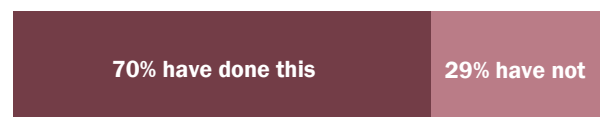
About seven-in-ten Twitter users get news on the site ...

% of U.S. adult Twitter users who ____ on Twitter



... and seven-in-ten of these news consumers have turned to Twitter for breaking news

% of U.S. adult Twitter **news consumers** who have used Twitter to keep up with a news event as it was happening



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adult Twitter users conducted May 17-31, 2021.

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Twitter news consumers have generally positive opinions of the accuracy and amount of news they see on the site. Although only 7% of Twitter news consumers say they have “a great deal” of trust in the accuracy of information on Twitter, two-thirds say they have at least some trust in it. This is far higher than the share of Americans (27%) who say they have at least some trust in the information they find on [social media in general](#). In addition, two-thirds of Twitter users who get news there say they like the amount of news they see on the site, versus 32% who say they are worn out by the amount of news there.

As with [so many other attitudes toward the media](#), however, significant partisan splits exist. Twitter news consumers who identify with or lean toward the Democratic Party express higher levels of trust in the news they find on the site than do those who identify with or lean toward the GOP: While 74% of these Democrats have at least some trust in the accuracy of news and information they find on Twitter, fewer Republicans (52%) say the same. Republican Twitter news consumers also express less satisfaction than their Democratic counterparts with the amount of news they see there. More of these Republicans (46%) say they are worn out by the amount of news they see on Twitter than Democrats (25%).

Among those who get news on Twitter, there is also a gap between the parties in perceptions of Twitter’s impact on society. Most Republicans who consume news on Twitter (63%) say the site is mostly bad for American democracy, while 26% of Democrats share this view. Democratic Twitter news consumers are more likely to say Twitter is mostly a *good* thing for democracy (54%).

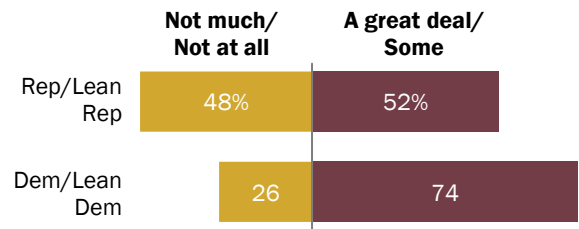
Two-thirds of Twitter news consumers have at least some trust in the accuracy of news there

% of U.S. adult Twitter news consumers who trust the accuracy of the news and information they get there ...



Democratic Twitter news consumers are more likely to trust the information they see on the site

% of U.S. adult Twitter news consumers who trust the accuracy of the news and information they get there ...



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adult Twitter users conducted May 17-31, 2021.

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On the whole, Twitter news consumers are more likely than other Twitter users ([and Americans overall](#)) to be Democrats, as well as to have college degrees and be relatively young. Twitter news consumers also are more engaged with the site in general – 46% say they visit Twitter every day.

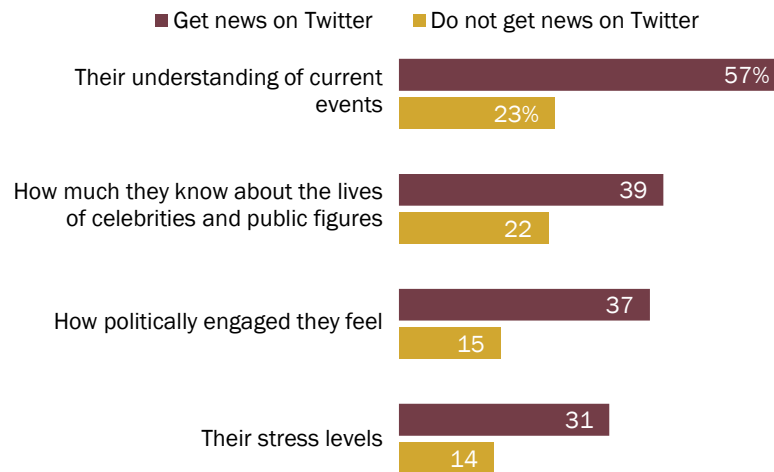
This appears to come with both benefits and drawbacks. Just over half of Americans who get news on Twitter (57%) say using Twitter has increased their understanding of current events, compared with 23% of other Twitter users. Twitter news consumers also are more

likely than other Twitter users to say that using the site has increased how politically engaged they feel (37% vs. 15%, respectively). However, some also report that it has increased their stress levels: 31% of Twitter news consumers say this, along with just 14% of other Twitter users.

The rest of this report looks at these and other findings in more detail. [An accompanying Pew Research Center report](#) examines Twitter behavior more broadly by pairing survey findings with user data.

Twitter news consumers are more likely to say the site has impacted their lives in a variety of ways

Among U.S. adult Twitter users who do/do not get news on Twitter, % who say using Twitter has increased ____ over the last year



Source: Survey of U.S. adult Twitter users conducted May 17-31, 2021. "News on Twitter: Consumed by Most Users and Trusted by Many"

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1. Majority of Twitter users get news on the site, and most see it as an important way to get news

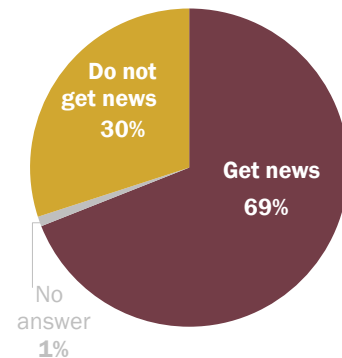
About seven-in-ten Twitter users in the United States (69%) say they get news or news headlines on the platform. And most of these news consumers think the news they get there is at least somewhat accurate and that the amount of news is about right.

Two-thirds of Twitter news consumers have at least some trust in the accuracy of the information they get on the platform – including 7% who have a great deal of trust – while a third say they have “not much” or no trust at all in it. This finding is in contrast with [earlier research](#) about social media more broadly, which found that 59% of Americans who use any social media platform for news expect the news they get there to be “largely inaccurate.”

Again, roughly two-thirds of Twitter news consumers are satisfied with the volume of news they get on the platform: 67% say they like the amount of news there is on Twitter, compared with 32% who say they are worn out by the amount of news on the platform.

About seven-in-ten Twitter users get news there

% of U.S. adult Twitter users who _____ on Twitter



Source: Survey of U.S. adult Twitter users conducted May 17-31, 2021.
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A much smaller portion of Twitter news consumers see Twitter as their central source of news. Just 8% of these news consumers say Twitter is the most important way they keep up with news, but the majority (59%) say it is an important – but not the most important way – they get news. About a third of Twitter users who get news there (32%) say it is not an important part of their news diet.

Similarly, most Twitter news consumers (62%) say they at least sometimes see news stories there they wouldn't have seen elsewhere, including 15% who say they often see these types of stories. A little more than a third (37%) say they hardly ever or never see unique news on the platform.

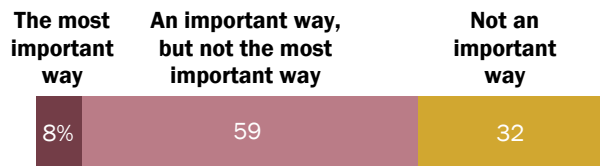
When it comes to breaking news, Twitter is a common source for many of its news consumers. Seven-in-ten Twitter news consumers say they have used Twitter to follow live news events, compared with about three-in-ten (29%) who have not. This has increased slightly since 2015, when 59% of Twitter news consumers said they [used the platform to follow breaking news](#).

Most Twitter news consumers say they see unique news there

% of U.S. adult Twitter news consumers who say the news stories they see on Twitter are ___ ones they wouldn't have seen elsewhere



% of U.S. adult Twitter news consumers who say Twitter is ___ they keep up with the news



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adult Twitter users conducted May 17-31, 2021.

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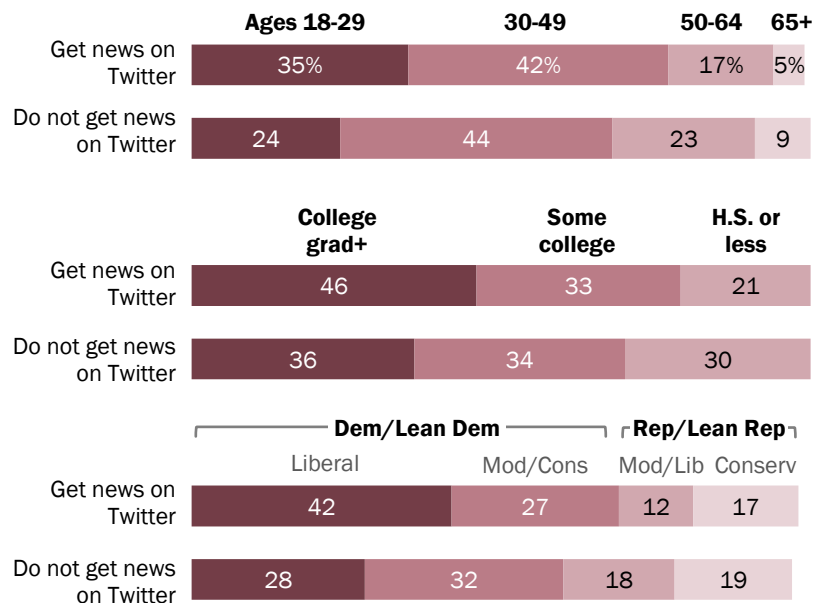
2. Twitter news consumers visit site more often than other Twitter users but still go there most for entertainment

Twitter news consumers stand out in several ways from other Americans who use Twitter. Notably, they're more likely to be Democrats, and liberal Democrats in particular – liberal Democrats (including those who lean to the party) make up 42% of Twitter news consumers, versus 28% of other users. Only about one-in-five in each group are conservative Republicans or GOP leaners.

Twitter news consumers also are younger, on average, than other Twitter users – about three-quarters (77%) are under 50 – and more likely to have a higher education: 46% have at least a bachelor's degree, compared with 36% of other users.

Twitter news consumers younger, more educated and more likely to be liberal Democrats than other users

Among U.S. adult Twitter users who do/do not get news on Twitter, % who are ...



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adult Twitter users conducted May 17-31, 2021.

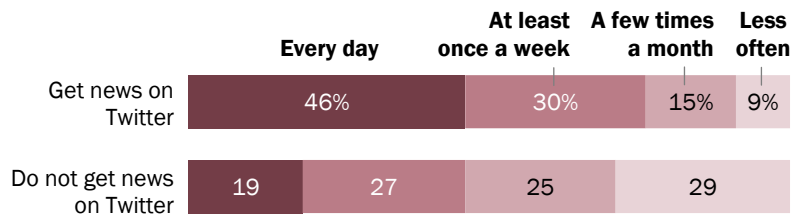
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Twitter users who get news on the site also tend to be much more engaged than other users in a variety of ways – not just related to news. For example, they say they visit the site far more often than other users. Close to half of Twitter news consumers (46%) say they visit the site every day, compared with 19% of other users. This includes 13% of Twitter news consumers who say they log onto the site “too many times to count” during a typical day.

Just under half of Twitter news consumers say they visit the site every day

Among U.S. adult Twitter users who do/do not get news on Twitter, % who visit the site ...



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adult Twitter users conducted May 17-31, 2021.

“News on Twitter: Consumed by Most Users and Trusted by Many”

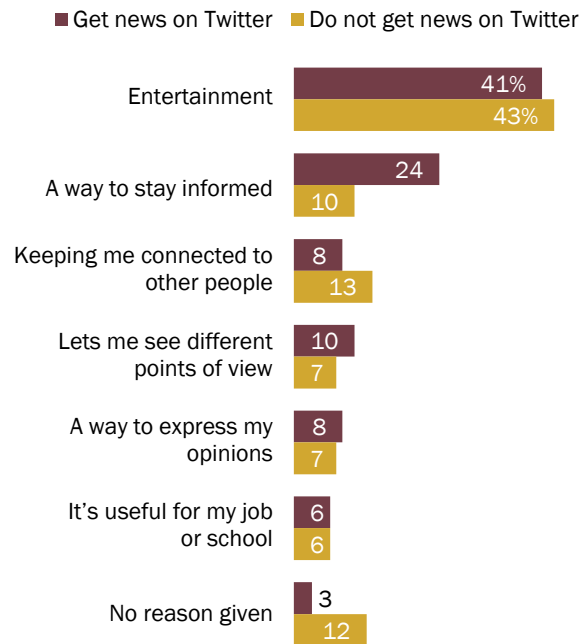
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For both Twitter news consumers and other Twitter users, entertainment tops the list of most important reasons for using the site, named by 41% of news consumers and 43% of other users. But Twitter news consumers are much more likely than others to say that their most important reason for using Twitter is to stay informed (24% vs. 10%).

Similar shares of both groups say Twitter is most useful for seeing different points of view, as a way to express their opinions, or as a resource for work or school.

Both Twitter news consumers and other users cite entertainment as the most important reason they use Twitter

Among U.S. adult Twitter users who do/do not get news on Twitter, % who say ____ is the most important reason they use Twitter



Source: Survey of U.S. adult Twitter users conducted May 17-31, 2021.

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Twitter news consumers are more likely than other users to say that the site has impacted them in a number of ways. Just over half (57%) say that using Twitter has increased their understanding of current events, more than double the share of other Twitter users who say this (23%). Twitter users who get news on the site also are more inclined to say that using Twitter has increased how much they know about celebrities and public figures (39% vs. 22% of other users), and to say that using Twitter has increased their sense of political engagement (37% vs. 15%).

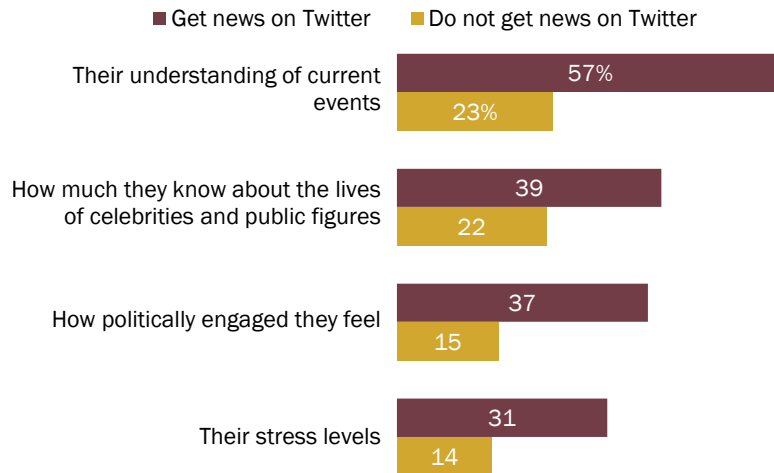
At the same time, Twitter news consumers also are about twice as likely as other users to say that using Twitter has increased their stress levels (31% vs. 14%). Very few in either group say it has decreased their stress.

All in all, Twitter news consumers are nearly twice as likely as other users to say the site is good for American democracy (43% vs. 23%). Indeed, these news consumers

are more likely to say Twitter is good for democracy than bad for democracy (36%), with 19% saying it has no impact. Twitter users who don't get news on the site are much more negative on this question – 23% say the site is good for democracy, while

Twitter news consumers are more likely to say the site has impacted their lives in a variety of ways

Among U.S. adult Twitter users who do/do not get news on Twitter, % who say using Twitter has increased ____ over the past year

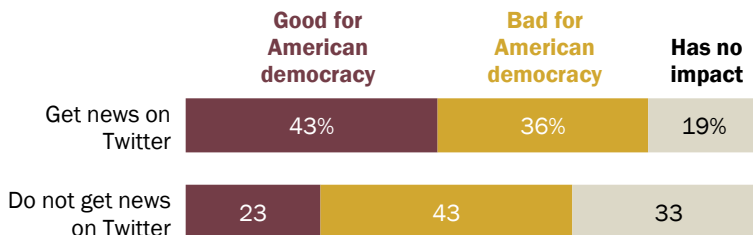


Source: Survey of U.S. adult Twitter users conducted May 17-31, 2021. "News on Twitter: Consumed by Most Users and Trusted by Many"

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Twitter news consumers more likely than other users to say that Twitter is good for democracy

Among U.S. adult Twitter users who do/do not get news on Twitter, % who think Twitter is mostly ...



Note: Those who did not answer not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adult Twitter users conducted May 17-31, 2021. "News on Twitter: Consumed by Most Users and Trusted by Many"

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43% say it is bad for democracy, and a third say it has no impact. Twitter users overall are [about evenly split](#) between saying the site is mostly good or bad for democracy.

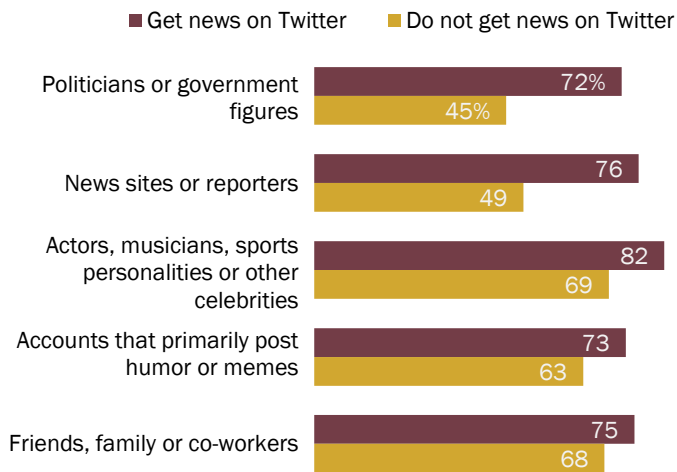
Twitter news consumers more likely to follow most types of accounts

Twitter users who get news on the site are more likely than other users to follow several types of accounts, including but not limited to political figures and news reporters or organizations. About seven-in-ten (72%) say they follow politicians or government figures, compared with 45% of other users. And 76% say they follow news sites or reporters as well, versus 49% of Twitter users who do not get news on the site.

These news consumers also are slightly more likely to follow entertainment or sports figures, humor accounts, or friends or family.

Twitter users who get news there are more likely than others to follow politicians, news accounts

Among U.S. adult Twitter users who do/do not get news on Twitter, % who say they follow at least a few ...



Note: Respondents shown here include those who said they follow either “a lot” or “a few” of these types of accounts. Respondents who said they follow “none” of these types of accounts or who did not provide an answer are not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adult Twitter users conducted May 17-31, 2021.

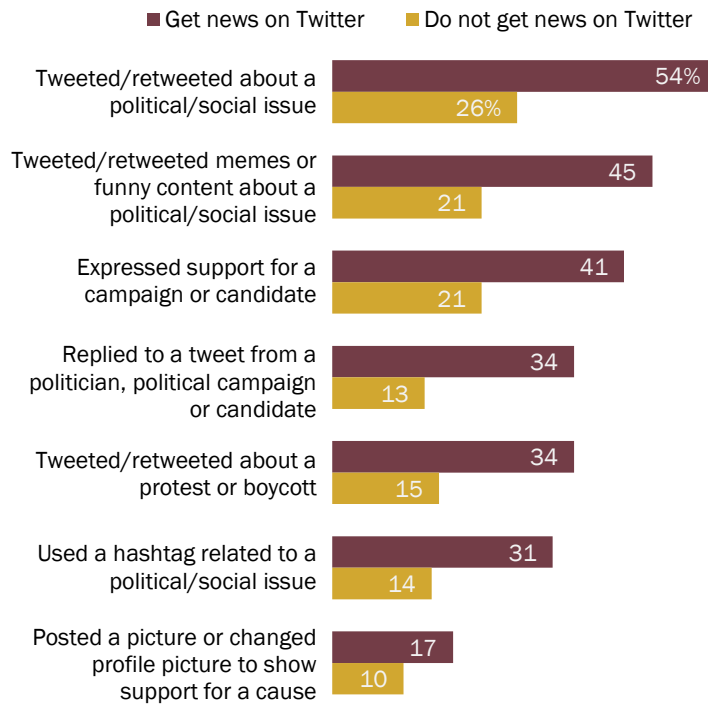
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Twitter users who say they get news on the platform are more likely than other users to be politically engaged on Twitter at every level – from retweeting content about a political or social issue, to tweeting about a call to action, to replying directly to a politician. For example, 41% of Twitter news consumers say they have expressed support for a candidate or campaign on Twitter in the past year, compared with 21% of other Twitter users.

Twitter news consumers more politically engaged on the site at every level

Among U.S. adult Twitter users who do/do not get news on Twitter, % who have done each of the following activities on Twitter over the past year



Source: Survey of U.S. adult Twitter users conducted May 17-31, 2021.
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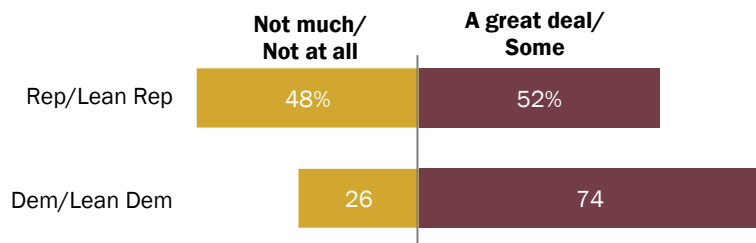
3. Among Twitter news consumers, Democrats tend to be more positive about getting news on the site

While those who get news on Twitter tend to be more positive about, and engaged with, the content on the site than other Twitter users, there are differences between political parties within the broader group of Twitter news consumers. In general, Democrats who get news on Twitter offer more positive assessments of the amount and accuracy of that news than their Republican counterparts.

This partisan difference in trust among Twitter news consumers mirrors partisan gaps in [trust of the news media overall](#). Democrats and Democratic-leaning independents who get news on Twitter are more likely to say they trust the accuracy of the news and information there at least some (74% say this). Republicans (including leaners) who get news on Twitter, on the other hand, are about evenly split on this question – 52% say they have at least some trust in the information they see on Twitter, but 48% say they trust it “not much” or “not at all.”

Democrats who get news on Twitter more likely than Republicans to trust the information on the site

% of U.S. adult Twitter news consumers who trust the accuracy of the news and information they get there ...



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adult Twitter users conducted May 17-31, 2021.

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This high level of trust among Democrats who get news on Twitter is driven by liberal Democrats: 83% say they trust the news on Twitter at least some, compared with 59% of Democrats who describe themselves as moderate or conservative. Republican news consumers have a similar level of trust in the information they find on Twitter regardless of their self-described political ideology.

Republican news consumers, for their part, are more likely to be worn out by the sheer amount of news they see on the site. Among Twitter news consumers, nearly half of Republicans (46%) say they are worn out by the amount of news there, while fewer among their Democratic counterparts (25%) say this. Three-quarters of Democrats who get news on Twitter say they like the amount of news there is on the site.

Democrats also are slightly more likely than Republicans to see the site as an important source of news. Nearly three-quarters of Democrats who get news on Twitter (72%) say that the site is an important way, or the *most* important way, that they get news, versus 56% of their Republican counterparts.

Finally, there is disagreement among news consumers over Twitter's impact on society.

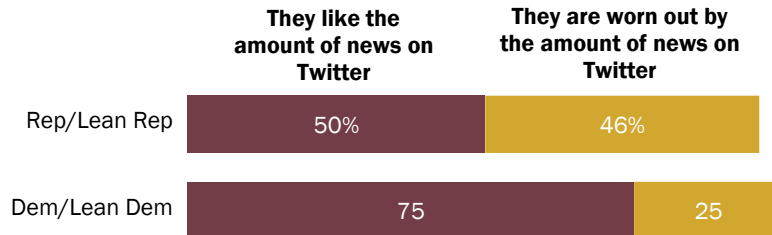
Among Twitter news consumers, 63% of

Republicans and Republican-

leaning independents say Twitter is mostly bad for American democracy. Democratic news consumers (and leaners), meanwhile, are more likely to say Twitter is mostly *good* for American democracy: 54% say this, versus 26% who say it is mostly bad.

Among Twitter news consumers, Republicans more likely to say they are worn out by the amount of news there than Democrats

% of U.S. adult Twitter news consumers who say ...



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

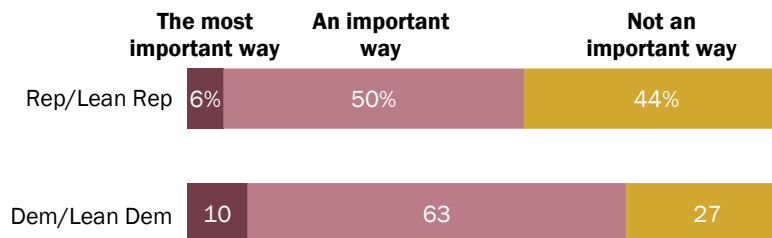
Source: Survey of U.S. adult Twitter users conducted May 17-31, 2021.

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Roughly three-quarters of Democrats who get news on Twitter say it is an important way they stay informed

% of U.S. adult Twitter news consumers who say that Twitter is ___ they keep up with the news



Note: Those who did not answer not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adult Twitter users conducted May 17-31, 2021.

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Acknowledgments

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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.

Amy Mitchell, *Director, Journalism Research*

Elisa Shearer, *Research Associate*

Galen Stocking, *Senior Computational Scientist*

Katerina Eva Matsa, *Associate Director Research*

Sarah Naseer, *Research Assistant*

Naomi Forman-Katz, *Research Assistant*

Kirsten Worden, *Research Assistant*

Mason Walker, *Research Analyst*

Mike Lipka, *Editorial Manager*

Rachel Weisel, *Senior Communications Manager*

Andrew Grant, *Communications Associate*

David Kent, *Senior Copy Editor*

Sara Atske, *Associate Digital Producer*

Methodology

The American Trends Panel survey methodology

Overview

The American Trends Panel (ATP), created by Pew Research Center, is a nationally representative panel of randomly selected U.S. adults. Panelists participate via self-administered web surveys. Panelists who do not have internet access at home are provided with a tablet and wireless internet connection. Interviews are conducted in both English and Spanish. The panel is being managed by Ipsos.

Data in this report is drawn from the panel wave conducted May 17 to May 31, 2021. The sample is comprised of panelists who indicated that they use Twitter on the Wave 85 survey conducted on the ATP in March 2021. A total of 2,548 panelists responded out of 2,643 who were sampled, for a response rate of 96%. The cumulative response rate accounting for nonresponse to the recruitment surveys and attrition is 4%. The break-off rate among panelists who logged on to the survey and completed at least one item is less than 1%. The margin of sampling error for the full sample of 2,548 respondents is plus or minus 3.4 percentage points.

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Panel recruitment

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 whom 9,942 (50%) agreed to participate.

American Trends Panel recruitment surveys

Recruitment dates	Mode	Invited	Joined	Active panelists remaining
Jan. 23 to March 16, 2014	Landline/ cell RDD	9,809	5,338	2,181
Aug. 27 to Oct. 4, 2015	Landline/ cell RDD	6,004	2,976	1,241
April 25 to June 4, 2017	Landline/ cell RDD	3,905	1,628	620
Aug. 8 to Oct. 31, 2018	ABS	9,396	8,778	5,893
Aug. 19 to Nov. 30, 2019	ABS	5,900	4,720	2,323
June 1 to July 19, 2020; Feb. 10 to March 31, 2021	ABS	3,197	2,812	2,442
	Total	38,211	26,252	14,700

Note: Approximately once per year, panelists who have not participated in multiple consecutive waves or who did not complete an annual profiling survey are removed from the panel. Panelists also become inactive if they ask to be removed from the panel.

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In August 2018, the ATP switched from telephone to address-based recruitment. Invitations were sent to a random, address-based sample of households selected from the U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File. Two additional recruitments were conducted using the same method in 2019 and 2020, respectively. Across these three address-based recruitments, a total of 18,493 adults were invited to join the ATP, of whom 16,310 (88%) agreed to join the panel and completed an initial profile survey. 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. Of the 26,252 individuals who have ever joined the ATP, 14,700 remained active panelists and continued to receive survey invitations at the time this survey was conducted.

The U.S. Postal Service's Delivery Sequence File has been estimated to cover as much as 98% of the population, although some studies suggest that the coverage could be in the low 90% range.¹ The American Trends Panel never uses breakout routers or chains that direct respondents to additional surveys.

Sample design

The overall target population for this survey was Twitter users ages 18 and older, living in the U.S., including Alaska and Hawaii. The sample consisted of 2,643 panelists who indicated that they use Twitter on the Wave 85 survey conducted on the ATP in March 2021.

Questionnaire development and testing

The questionnaire was developed by Pew Research Center in consultation with Ipsos. The web program was rigorously tested on both PC and mobile devices by the Ipsos project management team and Pew Research Center researchers. The Ipsos project management team also populated test data which was analyzed in SPSS to ensure the logic and randomizations were working as intended before launching the survey.

Incentives

All respondents were offered a post-paid incentive for their participation. Respondents could choose to receive the post-paid incentive in the form of a check or a gift code to Amazon.com or could choose to decline the incentive. Incentive amounts ranged from \$5 to \$20 depending on whether the respondent belongs to a part of the population that is harder or easier to reach. Differential incentive amounts were designed to increase panel survey participation among groups that traditionally have low survey response propensities.

¹ AAPOR Task Force on Address-based Sampling. 2016. "[AAPOR Report: Address-based Sampling.](#)"

Data collection protocol

The data collection field period for this survey was May 17 to May 31, 2021. Postcard notifications were mailed to all ATP panelists with a known residential address on May 17.

Invitations were sent out in two separate launches: Soft Launch and Full Launch. Sixty panelists were included in the soft launch, which began with an initial invitation sent on May 17, 2021. The ATP panelists chosen for the initial soft launch were known responders who had completed previous ATP surveys within one day of receiving their invitation. All remaining English- and Spanish-speaking panelists were included in the full launch and were sent an invitation on May 18.

All panelists with an email address received an email invitation and up to four email reminders if they did not respond to the survey. All ATP panelists that consented to SMS messages received an SMS invitation and up to four SMS reminders.

Invitation and reminder dates

	Soft Launch	Full Launch
Initial invitation	May 17, 2021	May 18, 2021
1 st reminder	May 21, 2021	May 21, 2021
2 nd reminder	May 24, 2021	May 24, 2021
3 rd reminder	May 26, 2021	May 26, 2021
Final reminder	May 28, 2021	May 28, 2021

Data quality checks

To ensure high-quality data, the Center's researchers performed data quality checks to identify any respondents showing clear patterns of satisficing. This includes checking for very high rates of leaving questions blank, as well as always selecting the first or last answer presented. As a result of this checking, one ATP respondent was removed from the survey dataset prior to weighting and analysis.

Weighting

The ATP data was weighted in a multistep process that accounts for multiple stages of sampling and nonresponse that occur at different points in the survey process. First, each panelist begins with a base weight that reflects their probability of selection for their initial recruitment survey (and the probability of being invited to participate in the panel in cases where only a subsample of respondents were invited). The base

weights for panelists recruited in different years are scaled to be proportionate to the effective sample size for all active panelists in their cohort. To correct for nonresponse to the initial recruitment surveys and gradual panel attrition, the base weights for all active panelists are calibrated to align with the population benchmarks identified in the accompanying table to create a full-panel weight.

For ATP waves in which only a subsample of panelists are invited to participate, a wave-specific base weight is created by adjusting the full-panel weights for subsampled panelists to account for any differential probabilities of selection for the particular panel wave. For waves in which all active panelists are invited to participate, the wave-specific base weight is identical to the full-panel weight.

In the final weighting step, the wave-specific base weights for panelists who completed the survey are again calibrated to match the population benchmarks specified above. These weights are trimmed (typically at about the 1st and 99th percentiles) to reduce the loss in precision stemming from variance in the weights. Sampling errors and test of statistical significance take into account the effect of weighting.

For this wave, the sample was weighted to align with benchmarks that were estimated among all Twitter users who responded to Wave 85.

Weighting dimensions

Variable	Benchmark source
Age x Gender	Twitter users from ATP Wave 85
Education x Gender	
Education x Age	
Race/Ethnicity x Education	
Born inside vs. outside the U.S. among Hispanics and Asian Americans	
Years lived in the U.S.	
Census region x Metro/Non-metro	
Volunteerism	
Voter registration	
Party affiliation	
Frequency of Internet use	
Religious affiliation	

Note: These dimensions were also used to construct the Wave 85 weight. See the Wave 85 methodology statement for more details.

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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	2,548	3.4 percentage points
Gets news on Twitter	1,783	4.0 percentage points
Does not get news on Twitter	751	6.1 percentage points
<i>Among those who get news on Twitter</i>		
Rep/Lean Rep	452	7.7 percentage points
Dem/Lean Dem	1,311	4.8 percentage points

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

Dispositions and response rates

Final dispositions	AAPOR code	Total
Completed interview	1.1	2,548
Logged onto survey; broke off	2.12	14
Logged onto survey; did not complete any items	2.1121	8
Never logged on (implicit refusal)	2.11	72
Survey completed after close of the field period	2.27	0
Completed interview but was removed for data quality		1
Screened out		0
Total panelists in the survey		2,643
Completed interviews	I	2,548
Partial interviews	P	0
Refusals	R	95
Non-contact	NC	0
Other	O	0
Unknown household	UH	0
Unknown other	UO	0
Not eligible	NE	0
Total		2,643
AAPOR RR1 = $I / (I+P+R+NC+O+UH+UO)$		96%

Cumulative response rate	Total
Weighted response rate to recruitment surveys	12%
% of recruitment survey respondents who agreed to join the panel, among those invited	69%
% of those agreeing to join who were active panelists at start of Wave W90	56%
Response rate to Wave W90 survey	96%
Cumulative response rate	4%