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National Survey Examines Personal News Cycle of African American and Hispanic News Consumers

Coverage Lacking Diversity May Be a Bigger Problem Than Access or Interest

Chicago, September 16, 2014—A new national survey exploring how African Americans and Hispanics get their news reveals that the predicted digital divide, in which people of color would be left behind in the use of technology, is not playing out as many of those forecasting the digital future anticipated. The survey findings suggest a divide based on content, not technology.

The survey finds that the two largest minority groups in the United States, African Americans and Hispanics, are using digital technology to obtain news at rates similar to the American population overall. Yet they do not believe that the growth of web and mobile media has fulfilled the promise of more coverage and more accurate coverage of their respective racial and ethnic communities. The new survey—the second to be released by the Media Insight Project, an initiative of the American Press Institute (API) and the [Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#)—was produced in collaboration with the Maynard Institute, New America Media, and the McCormick Foundation.

“The great worry that people of color would not have access to digital has not occurred as many feared—thanks in part to the advance of wireless,” said Tom Rosenstiel, executive director of the API. “But more access has not translated into creating more content that audiences think is rich, diverse, and accurate about underserved communities.”

African American and Hispanic American adults have come to rely on a variety of technologies and devices to get their news today, and in rates similar to adults in the United States generally. However, for many African Americans and Hispanics the digital news landscape hasn’t made it easier to learn about their own racial or ethnic community.

Among the findings:

- On average, African American adults use 4.2 technologies for news each week, versus 3.9 for whites and 3.5 for Hispanics.
- They are adapting to wireless at even faster rates. Fully 85 percent of African Americans and 78 percent of Hispanics who have smart phones use them to get news each week, versus 74 percent of whites.
- A third of Hispanics and a quarter of African Americans believe their communities are accurately portrayed in the media.
- Half of adults in either group believe their communities are covered regularly in the media today.



“The differing levels of skepticism about the accuracy of media portrayals of their respective communities is an important finding,” said Trevor Tompson, vice president for public affairs research for NORC at the University of Chicago and director of the AP-NORC Center. “This could be connected to an uneven news ecosystem, where Hispanics in the United States have access to an expanding Spanish-language media market, while African American press has contracted in recent years.”

Hispanics are most likely to cite ethnic media sources as most accurate in the portrayal of their community, while for African Americans, no single source stands out. The survey also shows that African Americans and Hispanics consume news similarly to the population overall: there is no preferred device or technology to access news, there is a preference for getting news directly from an organization, and the news topic drives the news source.

About the Survey

This nationally representative survey of the 50 states and the District of Columbia was conducted by telephone with 1,492 adults age 18 and older, with a margin of error of +/- 3.6 percent. The sample includes oversamples of 358 Hispanic adults and 318 non-Hispanic African American adults. The margin of error for the Hispanic sample is +/-8.5 percent, and for the non-Hispanic African American sample it is +/- 7.9 percent.

Additional information, including the survey report and the survey’s complete topline findings, can be found at: www.mediainsight.org.

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[About the Media Insight Project](#)

The Media Insight Project is a new collaboration between the American Press Institute (API) and the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research with the objective of conducting high-quality, innovative research meant to inform the news industry and the public about various important issues facing journalism and the news business. The Media Insight Project brings together the expertise of both organizations and their respective partners, and involves collaborations among key staff at the API, NORC at the University of Chicago, and the AP.

[About the American Press Institute](#)

The American Press Institute (API) conducts research and training, convenes thought leaders, and creates tools to help chart a path ahead for journalism in the 21st century. The API is an educational non-advocacy 501(c)3 nonprofit organization affiliated with the Newspaper Association of America. It aims to help the news media, especially local publishers and newspaper media, advance in the digital age.



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[About the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#)

The AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research taps into the power of social science research and the highest-quality journalism to bring key information to people across the nation and throughout the world.

- [The Associated Press](#) (AP) is the world's essential news organization, bringing fast, unbiased news to all media platforms and formats.
- [NORC at the University of Chicago](#) is one of the oldest and most respected, independent research institutions in the world.

The two organizations have established the AP-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research to conduct, analyze, and distribute social science research in the public interest on newsworthy topics, and to use the power of journalism to tell the stories that research reveals.

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