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## Fatigue, Traditionalism, and Engagement: Gen Z and Millennials' Complex Relationship with News

*New Media Insight Project study reveals Gen Z and Millennials follow news from a range of sources but have concerns about its reliability and the spread of misinformation in both traditional and social media.*

**CHICAGO, August 31, 2022** — A new in-depth survey of 16- to 40-year-olds shows that members of the Gen Z and Millennial generations are active consumers of news and information, with nearly a third of them willing to pay for it. But their relationship with the news is complex — their trust in the press is low, many are experiencing digital fatigue, and 9 in 10 are worried about misinformation in both traditional and social media, according to a new study from the [Media Insight Project](#), a collaboration between the [American Press Institute](#) and [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#).

This study features a survey of 5,975 Americans ages 16 to 40. The large nationally representative sample provides a unique opportunity for a detailed analysis of America's most diverse generations.

Gen Z and Millennials get news from a wide range of sources on a variety of topics. That mix includes traditional national and local news outlets such as newspapers, TV news stations, their websites, and apps. It also includes a wide range of social media platforms — including Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Twitter, Reddit, LinkedIn, Twitch, and Nextdoor.

“News organizations are constantly struggling with how they can better serve younger audiences, and the survey provides some practical information about the complexity of the news habits and attitudes of Gen Z and Millennials,” said Michael D. Bolden, CEO and executive director of the American Press Institute. “These generations have both traditional and novel views about what they want from the media, and there is a great deal of diversity in how they follow news. They also want media to improve how they cover the diversity of our communities. This is important, actionable guidance for our industry.”

The research builds upon a 2015 Media Insight Project study of Millennials. The high levels of news consumption among Gen Z and Millennials are similar to what they were seven years ago. However, Facebook is no longer the dominant social media platform among this population. Today, Gen Z and Millennials also use other social media platforms, such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter, to access news and information. When compared with 2015, fewer respondents say they enjoy getting news and are talking less with friends and family about the news. Many also report feeling worn out by being online.



“While the study highlights a great deal of engagement with the news, it also points out areas where the news media can improve to better serve these generations,” said Jennifer Benz, deputy director of The AP-NORC Center. “Half of Gen Z and Millennials feel news coverage of communities of color is mostly inaccurate, many are experiencing digital news fatigue, and there is widespread concern about the spread of misinformation.”

#### Key findings include:

- **Millennials and Gen Z use traditional news outlets, not just social platforms.** Nearly three-quarters of 16- to 40-year-olds (74%) get news and information at least weekly from traditional news sources such as national or local TV and newspapers, including their websites or apps. Forty-five percent do so daily. Most continue to rely on social media more heavily as a pathway to news; 91% get news there at least weekly. Nonetheless, these findings contradict the stereotype that traditional outlets have no place in the life of younger consumers. Of those who use traditional media daily, 28% get news from local radio stations or newspapers either in print or online, 29% from national radio programs or newspapers, and similar numbers for local and national TV-based outlets.
- **Millennials and Gen Z continue to pay for news.** In all, 28% pay out of their own pocket for news content such as magazines, newspapers, and news apps. Paying for news also increases with age, as older Millennials are the most likely to pay for news (36%) — twice the rate of Gen Z (18%). In 2015, among Millennials then, 30% paid for the same types of news out of their own pocket.
- **These generations have both traditional and novel expectations from the news media.** A majority (61%) say they want the news media to be fair to all sides, to verify and get the facts right (69%), and to be neutral (57%). Almost as many (55%) say it is very or extremely important for the press to provide diverse points of view. About half consider it important for the press to help people understand communities unlike their own (52%) and to report on solutions to society’s problems (51%).
- **At the same time, enjoyment of the news is falling.** By nearly every measure, the numbers for whether people enjoy the news and how they use it are lower than seven years ago. Today, less than a third (32%) of 16- to 40-year-old Americans find the news enjoyable or entertaining. Seven years ago, 53% said they enjoyed getting the news. That represents a drop of 21 percentage points. We find a similar drop in people talking about news. Seven years ago, 53% of Millennials said they liked to talk with friends and family about the news. Today that number has fallen to 37% of Gen Z and Millennials.
- **Millennials and Gen Z are feeling digital fatigue and have adopted different tactics to combat it.** While 9 in 10 Millennials and Gen Z report being online more than two hours a day, 3 in 10 report feeling worse the longer they are connected. Seventy-nine percent report doing something in response. About half (47%) say they pay attention to the way certain products try



to keep them engaged, 27% try to set limits on the time they spend online, and 23% use apps or settings to track their time.

- **Trust in the press is low, but so is trust in social media. Local news fares better than national.** Only about a quarter of 16- to 40-year-olds have a positive view of the news media generally or national news outlets particularly (23%). Trust in local news media, while not great, is higher. About a third (35%) have favorable attitudes toward local media outlets. But when we dig deeper, there are signals of higher confidence. For instance, most Gen Z and Millennials find local TV stations or their websites (53%), local newspapers in print or online (59%), and even national newspapers in print or online (54%) as completely or very reliable when getting “hard news” topics. The numbers are similar for “news you can use” topics such as news about health or products.
- **Many believe the media fails to accurately cover communities of color and immigrants in America.** Nearly half (49%) believe media coverage of immigrants is slightly or totally inaccurate, and a similar percent say the same about Black Americans (48%) and Hispanic Americans (45%). Coverage of white Americans is viewed more positively, though 36% still consider it mostly inaccurate.

### About the report

This survey was conducted by the Media Insight Project, an initiative of the American Press Institute (API) and The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. The survey was funded by API. Staff from API, NORC at the University of Chicago, and AP collaborated on all aspects of the study.

Data were collected using both probability and non-probability sample sources. Interviews for this survey were conducted May 18 through June 8, 2022, with people ages 16 to 40 representing the 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The probability sample source is the AmeriSpeak® Panel, NORC’s probability-based panel designed to be representative of the U.S. household population. The non-probability sample was provided by Lucid based on quotas related to age, race and ethnicity, gender, and education.

The overall margin of error for the combined sample is +/- 1.7 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level, including the design effect. The margin of sampling error may be higher for subgroups. Sampling error is only one of many potential sources of error and there may be other unmeasured error in this or any other survey.

Complete questions and results are available at [www.mediainsight.org](http://www.mediainsight.org).  
Details about the Media Insight Project can be found at: [www.mediainsight.org](http://www.mediainsight.org).

A full description of the study methodology for the surveys can be found at the end of the report.



The proper description of the survey's authorship is as follows: This study was conducted jointly by the [American Press Institute](#) and [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#).

### **About the Media Insight Project**

The Media Insight Project is a collaboration between the American Press Institute and The AP-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 American Press Institute, NORC at the University of Chicago, and The Associated Press.

<http://www.mediainsight.org/>

### **About the American Press Institute**

The American Press Institute advances an innovative and sustainable news industry by helping publishers understand and engage audiences, grow revenue, improve public-service journalism, and succeed at organizational change. We believe that for democracies to thrive, people need accurate news and information about their communities, the problems of civil society and the debates over how to solve them. That requires an economically sustainable free press that reflects the diversity of American society and understands the needs of its communities. API is a national 501(c)3 nonprofit educational organization affiliated with the News Media Alliance.

<http://www.pressinstitute.org>

### **About the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research**

Celebrating its 10th anniversary this year, 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 an independent global news organization dedicated to factual reporting. Founded in 1846, AP today remains the most trusted source of fast, accurate, unbiased news in all formats and the essential provider of the technology and services vital to the news business. More than half the world's population sees AP journalism every day.

[www.ap.org](http://www.ap.org)

- NORC at the University of Chicago is one of the oldest objective and nonpartisan research institutions in the world. [www.norc.org](http://www.norc.org)

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. In its 10 years, The AP-NORC Center has conducted more than 250 studies exploring the critical issues facing the public, covering topics like health care, the economy, COVID-19, trust in media, and more. Learn more at [www.apnorc.org](http://www.apnorc.org)