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Republicans and Democrats Tend to Follow News in Similar Ways

New report explores how Republicans, Democrats, and independents get news and view the media

CHICAGO, July 13, 2017— Republicans and Democrats are very much alike in the ways they follow the news despite their differing opinions of the media, according to a report released today by the [Media Insight Project](#), a collaboration of the [American Press Institute](#) and [The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research](#).

People on both ends of the political spectrum are equally likely to pay for news, to get news from social media, to seek news out actively rather than obtain it passively, and to get news multiple times a day. Democrats and Republicans are also equally likely to use local news sources, and they tend to follow similar topics, the report finds.

Yet, Republicans and even independents tend to be less satisfied than Democrats with the sources they use. Democrats, for instance, are more likely than Republicans or independents to say the news sources they use are reliable. Democrats are also more likely than Republicans or independents to say the news sources they pay for are a good value.

“Although Republicans and independents are more skeptical of the media than Democrats, people on either end of the political spectrum are consuming news in quite similar ways,” said Tom Rosenstiel, executive director of the American Press Institute. “The political divisions facing the country present real challenges for the news industry as it tries to find a sustainable path forward. But the idea that Republicans and independents are consuming news entirely differently, or consuming entirely different news sources, isn’t true.”

Democrats and Republicans follow news in similar ways.

	Percent of Democrats	Percent of Independents	Percent of Republicans
Get news multiple times a day	72	61	71
Actively seek out news	68	57	65
Get news on social media	75	74	75
Pay for news	58	48	56
Regularly use a local news source	25	20	21

However, partisans hold different attitudes about the media and follow different news outlets.

	Percent of Democrats	Percent of Independents	Percent of Republicans
Get news from Fox News	7	16	40
Get news from CNN	30	20	18
Media keeps them very well informed on important issues	38	14	20
News from media is very accurate	31	9	8
News organizations prevent political leaders from doing their job	17	31	59
Consider source they pay for as very or extremely reliable	73	56	53

Key findings from the report include:

- Democrats and Republicans follow a range of news topics at strikingly similar rates. They are equally likely to follow news about national politics (61 percent vs. 64 percent), local politics (15 percent vs. 13 percent), and their town or neighborhood (16 percent vs. 19 percent).
- There are few differences when it comes to technology use for news among Democrats, Republicans, and independents. They are about equally likely to get news from cell phones (86 percent, 84 percent, and 85 percent) and computers (66 percent, 65 percent, and 63 percent), while independents are a little less likely to get news from televisions (84 percent, 85 percent, and 78 percent).
- Democrats are more likely than Republicans and independents to trust information from the media a lot (30 percent, 8 percent, and 12 percent).
- Among those who pay for news, 73 percent of Democrats say their paid source is very or extremely reliable versus 56 percent of independents and 53 percent of Republicans.
- Independents are less likely than Democrats and Republicans to watch, read, hear, or see news at least several times a day (61 percent vs. 72 percent and 71 percent).
- Democrats who pay for news are more likely than Republicans who pay to say the source they subscribe to is a very good value (45 percent vs. 30 percent).

“The results indicate that people who identify themselves as Democrats versus Republicans share the same basic approach to and appetite for news,” said Trevor Tompson, director of The

AP-NORC Center. “The real differences in behavior are found between people who identify with one of the two major political parties and those who consider themselves independents or nonpartisans.”

About the report

This research comes from two recent Media Insight Project surveys. The first, a [study about subscribing to news](#), interviewed 2,199 American adults from February 16 through March 20, 2017. The second is a [study of people’s trust in news from the media in general versus their trust in the news they use most often](#), which is based on interviews with 2,036 American adults from March 8 through March 27, 2017. This latter study employed an experiment where half of the respondents were asked questions about “the news media” generally, while the other half were asked the same questions about “the news media they use most often.” Both surveys used AmeriSpeak®, NORC’s probability-based panel.

Details about the Media Insight Project can be found at: 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 (API) conducts research and training, convenes thought leaders, and creates tools to help chart a path ahead for journalism in the 21st century. API is an educational nonadvocacy 501(c)3 nonprofit organization affiliated with the News Media Alliance. It aims to help the news media—especially local publishers and newspaper media—advance in the digital age.

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www.apnorc.org

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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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