

# Teen News Engagement: Key Findings and Toplines

## Key Findings

- 1. A large majority of teens age 13 to 17 in the U.S. (78%) say it's important to them to follow current events.**
- 2. Teens get their news more frequently from social media sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) or from YouTube than directly from news organizations themselves.** More than half of teens (54%) get news from social media, and 50% get news from YouTube at least a few times a week. Fewer than half, 41%, get news reported by news organizations in print or online at least a few times a week, and only 37% get news on TV at least a few times a week.
- 3. Teens are as likely to learn about what's happening from online influencers and celebrities as they are from news organizations and people in their lives.** Teens are about equally likely to say they are primarily informed about current events by news organizations (31%) as they are by family, friends, or teachers (33%) and by influencers or celebrities they follow online (31%).
- 4. Teens say they trust established news organizations more than other sources and that for the most part they are able to distinguish fact from fiction.** Seven in 10 overall (70%) say that news reported by news organizations “generally gets the facts straight,” while just 38% say the same about news from celebrities, influencers, or social media personalities. Nearly two in 10 teens (19%) actually say that getting news from social media has made them more confused about current events.
- 5. YouTube recommendations drive news consumption.** Among all teens who get their news on YouTube — regardless of how often — exactly half (50%) say they most often find news on YouTube because it was recommended by YouTube itself (i.e., as a “watch next” video or in the sidebar). Almost half as many (27%) say they follow or subscribe to a specific channel for news on YouTube, and fewer say they find their news on YouTube through search (10%) or because it was shared by someone they know in real life (7%).
- 6. Sixty percent of teens who get news from YouTube say they are more likely to get it from celebrities, influencers, and personalities, as compared to news organizations (39%).** The difference is even more apparent among daily YouTube news consumers: 71% vs. 28%.
- 7. Teens clearly prefer a visual medium for learning about the news.** A majority (64%) say that “seeing pictures and video showing what happened” gives them the best understanding of major news events, while just 36% say they'd prefer to read or hear the facts about what happened.

## Summary

A large majority of teens age 13 to 17 in the U.S. (78%) say it's important to them to follow current events, and their news habits reflect the diversity of the modern media landscape.

Results from a new Common Sense Media|SurveyMonkey poll show that teens get their news more frequently from social media sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) or from YouTube than directly from news organizations themselves. More than half of teens (54%) get news from social media, and 50% get news from YouTube at least a few times a week. Fewer than half, 41%, get news reported by news organizations in print or online at least a few times a week, and only 37% get news on TV at least a few times a week. For daily consumers of news, nearly three in 10 teens (29%) get news from social media every day, and 23% get news from YouTube every day. About as many (23%) get news every day from digital news aggregators or from phone notifications. Just 15% get news reported by news organizations in print or online every day, and 13% get news on TV every day.

### How often do you get news...

	<i>... from social media sites like Facebook or Twitter</i>	<i>... from digital news aggregators like Apple News or Google News, or from notifications on your phone</i>	<i>... from YouTube</i>	<i>... reported by news organizations in print or online</i>	<i>... on television</i>	<i>... by listening to podcasts</i>
Every day	29%	23%	23%	15%	13%	4%
A few times a week	25%	25%	27%	26%	24%	10%
Once a week	10%	12%	15%	16%	12%	8%
Less than once a week	13%	17%	19%	22%	28%	17%
Never	22%	22%	16%	22%	23%	60%

Teens clearly prefer a visual medium for learning about the news. A majority (64%) say that “seeing pictures and video showing what happened” gives them the best understanding of major news events, while just 36% say they’d prefer to read or hear the facts about what happened.

### TEENS SAY THEY CAN DISCERN FACT FROM FICTION

As the data above shows, news organizations are not the primary sources for most teens’ knowledge of current events. While most news organizations maintain accounts on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other platforms, they are still competing for attention against corporate brands, celebrities, “influencers,” and people’s personal connections.

In fact, teens are about equally likely to say they are primarily informed about current events by news organizations (31%) as they are by family, friends, or teachers (33%) and by influencers or celebrities they follow online (31%).

About six in 10 teens who get news from YouTube and social media sites say they are more likely to get it from celebrities, influencers, and personalities than news organizations on those platforms.

**When you get your news \_\_\_\_\_, are you more likely to get it from celebrities, influencers, and personalities, or from news organizations?**

	<i>... on YouTube</i>	<i>... on social media sites like Facebook or Twitter</i>
Celebrities, influencers, and personalities	60%	58%
News organizations	39%	41%

But teens—for the most part—say they are able to distinguish fact from fiction. Seven in 10 overall (70%) say that news reported by news organizations “generally gets the facts straight,” while just 38% say the same about news from celebrities, influencers, or social media personalities.

**Whether you get your news from them or not, do you think \_\_\_\_\_ generally gets the facts straight, or do you think these stories and reports are often inaccurate?**

	<i>... news reported by news organizations</i>	<i>... news from celebrities, influencers, or personalities who share content on YouTube or social media sites like Facebook or Twitter</i>
Gets the facts straight	70%	38%
Stories are often inaccurate	28%	61%

Nearly two in three teens (65%) who get news directly from news organizations say doing so has helped them better understand current events. That’s nine percentage points higher than among teens who get their news from YouTube (56%) and 12 points higher than among teens who get their news from social media sites (53%).

Nearly two in 10 teens (19%) actually say that getting news from social media has made them more confused about current events.

**In general, do you believe that getting news from \_\_\_\_\_ has made you better understand current events or made you more confused about current events, or has it not made much of a difference?**

	<i>... news organizations</i>	<i>... YouTube</i>	<i>... social media sites like Facebook and Twitter</i>
Better understand current events	65%	56%	53%
More confused about current events	13%	10%	19%
Not made much of a difference	21%	34%	27%

## TEENS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE MODERATES AND IDENTIFY AS DEMOCRATS, AND MANY ARE OPEN TO SOURCES WHOSE OPINIONS DIFFER FROM THEIR OWN

Just under half of teens (45%) say they get news from sources that have different views than their own once a week or more, and only 14% say they never get news from sources with different views. Slightly fewer (35%) say they discuss political issues with people who have different views once a week or more, and 19% say they never discuss politics with people who have opposing views.

Just over half of teens ages 16-17 say they'll be eligible to vote in the 2020 presidential election, and 11% are unsure. Of those who say they'll be eligible, 85% say they're likely to cast a ballot, including 61% who say they're "very likely." Nearly half of teens (47%) identify as moderates, with about equal numbers calling themselves conservative (23%) and liberal (27%). However, significantly more teens identify as Democrats (43%) than Republicans (30%) or non-leaning independents (26%).

## HOW YOUTUBE AND SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCERS DRIVE THE NEWS CONVERSATION

Among all teens who get their news on YouTube — regardless of how often — exactly half (50%) say they most often find news on YouTube because it was recommended by YouTube itself (i.e., as a "watch next" video or in the sidebar). Almost half as many (27%) say they follow or subscribe to a specific channel for news on YouTube, and fewer say they find their news on YouTube through search (10%) or because it was shared by someone they know in real life (7%).

Among teens who get their news from YouTube every day, a plurality (40%) say they most often find news videos to watch because they've subscribed to a specific channel, and the number who rely on YouTube to provide recommendations falls to 38%.

Teens who get their news on YouTube every day are more likely than others to say they get their news primarily from celebrities, influencers, and personalities (71% vs. 60% among all YouTube news viewers).

### When you get your news on YouTube, are you more likely to get it from celebrities, influencers, and personalities, or from news organizations?

	<i>All teens who get any news on YouTube</i>	<i>Teens who get news on YouTube every day</i>
Celebrities, influencers, and personalities	60%	71%
News organizations	39%	28%

Teens who get their news on YouTube every day are also more likely than others to say that doing so helps them better understand current events (71% vs. 56% among all YouTube news viewers). Similarly, teens who get their news from social media every day are more likely than others to say that doing so helps them better understand current events (73% vs. 65% among all who get news from social media).

Full results are available at <https://www.common sense media.org/research/quarterly-survey-series>.

# Methodology

This SurveyMonkey Audience survey was conducted June 14-25, 2019 among 1,005 teenagers age 13-17 in the United States. Respondents for these surveys were selected from more than two million people who take surveys on the SurveyMonkey platform each day. The modeled error estimate for the full sample is plus or minus 4.0 percentage points. Data have been weighted for age and sex using the Census Bureau's American Community Survey to reflect the demographic composition of the United States age 13-17.

# Toplines

## How important is it to you to follow current events in the news?

	Total (N=1,005)
<b>NET important</b>	<b>78%</b>
Very important	25%
Somewhat important	53%
<b>NET not important</b>	<b>22%</b>
Not so important	17%
Not important at all	5%

## What do you find gives you the best understanding of major news events: reading or hearing the facts from what happened or seeing pictures and video showing what happened?

	Total (N=1,005)
Reading or hearing the facts about what happened	36%
Seeing pictures and video showing what happened	64%

## My knowledge of current events is primarily informed by:

	Total (N=1,005)
People I know in the real world, such as friends, family, or teachers	33%
Personalities/influencers/celebrities I follow on social media or YouTube	31%
News organizations	31%
None of the above	5%

**How often do you get news from digital news aggregators like Apple News or Google News, or from notifications on your phone?**

	<i>Total (N=1,005)</i>
Every day	23%
A few times a week	25%
Once a week	12%
Less than once a week	17%
Never	22%

**How often do you watch the news on television?**

	<i>Total (N=1,005)</i>
Every day	13%
A few times a week	24%
Once a week	12%
Less than once a week	28%
Never	23%

**How often do you get news by listening to podcasts?**

	<i>Total (N=1,005)</i>
Every day	4%
A few times a week	10%
Once a week	8%
Less than once a week	17%
Never	60%

### How often do you get news from YouTube?

	<i>Total (N=1,005)</i>
Every day	23%
A few times a week	27%
Once a week	15%
Less than once a week	19%
Never	16%

### How often do you get news from social media sites like Facebook or Twitter?

	<i>Total (N=1,005)</i>
Every day	29%
A few times a week	25%
Once a week	10%
Less than once a week	13%
Never	22%

### How often do you get news reported by news organizations in print or online?

	<i>Total (N=1,005)</i>
Every day	15%
A few times a week	26%
Once a week	16%
Less than once a week	22%
Never	22%

**In general, do you believe that getting news from YouTube has made you better understand current events or made you more confused about current events, or has it not made much of a difference?**

	<i>Total (N=830)</i>
Better understand current events	56%
More confused about current events	10%
Not made much of a difference	34%

**When you get your news on YouTube, are you more likely to get it from celebrities, influencers, and personalities, or from news organizations?**

	<i>Total (N=830)</i>
Celebrities, influencers, and personalities	60%
News organizations	39%
No answer	1%

**How do you most often find news on YouTube?**

	<i>Total (N=830)</i>
It was shared by someone I know in real life	7%
I found it through search	10%
I follow or subscribe to a specific channel on YouTube	27%
It was recommended by YouTube (i.e., as a “watch next” video or in the sidebar)	50%
Other (please specify)	5%



**In general, do you believe that getting news from news organizations has made you better understand current events or made you more confused about current events, or has it not made much of a difference?**

	<i>Total (N=787)</i>
Better understand current events	65%
More confused about current events	13%
Not made much of a difference	21%
No answer	1%

**In general, do you believe that getting news from social media sites like Facebook or Twitter has made you better understand current events or made you more confused about current events, or has it not made much of a difference?**

	<i>Total (N=800)</i>
Better understand current events	53%
More confused about current events	19%
Not made much of a difference	27%
No answer	1%

**When you get your news on social media sites like Facebook or Twitter, are you more likely to get it from celebrities, influencers, and personalities, or from news organizations?**

	<i>Total (N=800)</i>
Celebrities, influencers, and personalities	58%
News organizations	41%
No answer	1%

**Whether you get your news from them or not, do you think news from celebrities, influencers, or personalities who share content on YouTube or social media sites like Facebook or Twitter generally gets the facts straight, or do you think these stories and reports are often inaccurate?**

	<i>Total (N=1,005)</i>
Gets the facts straight	38%
Stories are often inaccurate	61%
No answer	1%

**Whether you get your news from them or not, do you think news reported by news organizations generally gets the facts straight, or do you think their stories and reports are often inaccurate?**

	<i>Total (N=1,005)</i>
Gets the facts straight	70%
Stories are often inaccurate	28%
No answer	2%

**How often do you discuss political issues with people who have different views than you?**

	<i>Total (N=1,005)</i>
Every day	6%
A few times a week	18%
Once a week	11%
Several times a month	15%
Once a month	13%
Less than once a month	18%
Never	19%

## How often do you get news from sources that have different views than you?

	<i>Total (N=1,005)</i>
Every day	9%
A few times a week	23%
Once a week	13%
Several times a month	17%
Once a month	11%
Less than once a month	13%
Never	14%
No answer	1%

## Will you be eligible to vote in the 2020 presidential election?

	<i>Total (N=1,005)</i>
Yes	25%
No	64%
Not sure	11%

## How likely are you to vote in the 2020 presidential election?

	<i>Total (N=446)</i>
Very likely	49%
Somewhat likely	22%
Somewhat unlikely	13%
Very unlikely	13%
No answer	3%

**In general, how would you describe your views on most political issues? Are you:**

	<i>Total (N=1,005)</i>
Very conservative	6%
Conservative	17%
Moderate	47%
Liberal	18%
Very liberal	9%
No answer	3%

**Gender**

	<i>Total (N=1,005)</i>
Male	51%
Female	49%

**Party**

	<i>Total (N=1,005)</i>
Republican	25%
Lean Republican	5%
Independent no lean	26%
Lean Democrat	8%
Democrat	35%
No answer	2%

## Race/Ethnicity

	<i>Total (N=1,005)</i>
White	54%
Black	14%
Hispanic	23%
Asian	6%
No answer	4%

## What is your age?

	<i>Total (N=1,005)</i>
13	13%
14	20%
15	27%
16	19%
17	21%