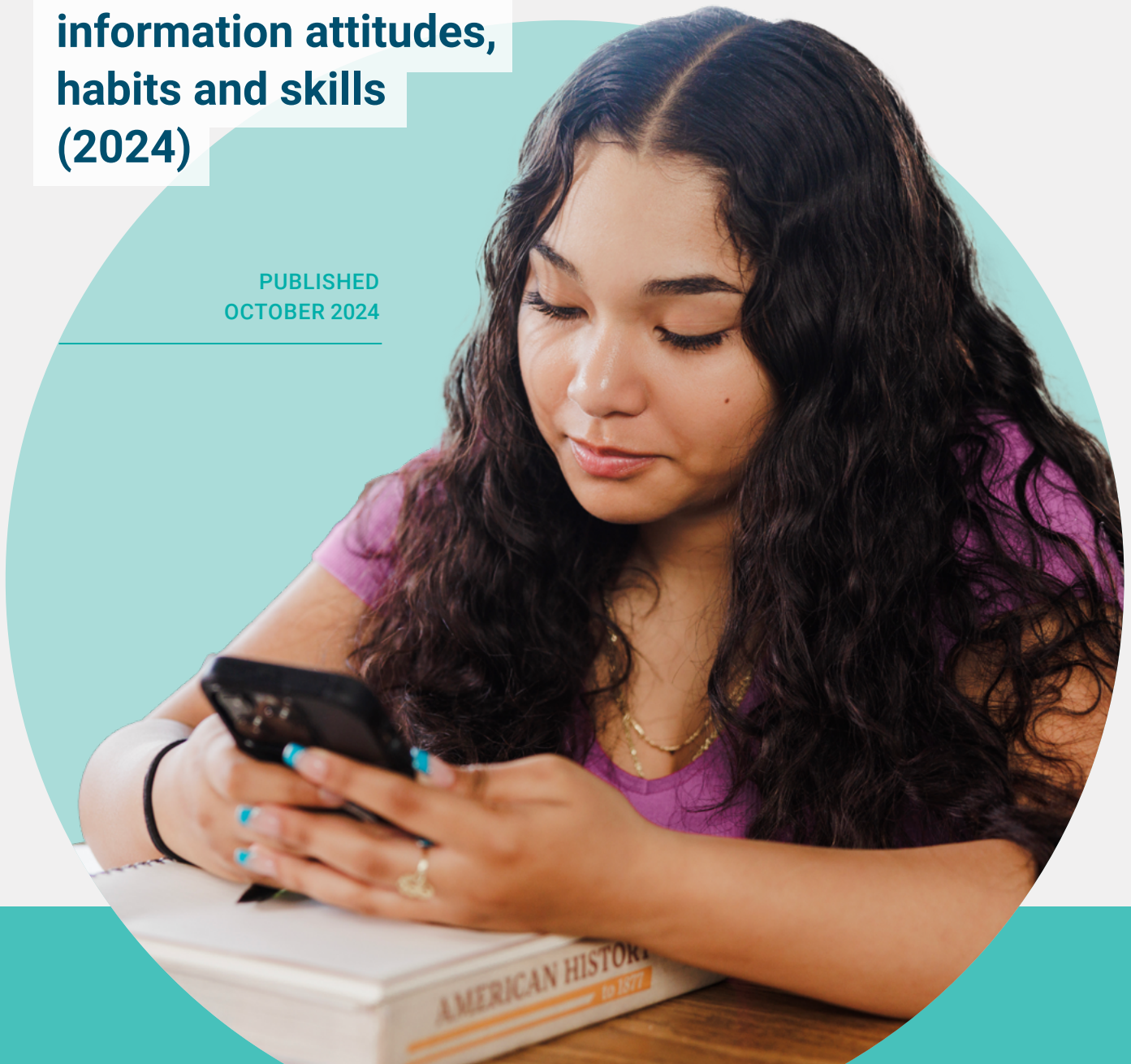


News Literacy in America:



**A survey of teen
information attitudes,
habits and skills
(2024)**

PUBLISHED
OCTOBER 2024





The News Literacy Project is a nonpartisan nonprofit building a national movement to ensure that all students are skilled in news literacy before high school graduation, giving them the knowledge and ability to participate in civic society as well-informed, critical thinkers. Founded in 2008, NLP is the country's leading provider of news literacy education and works with educators in all 50 states.

For more information, visit newslit.org or contact us at info@newslit.org.



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(Key Findings)

1. Teens want media literacy instruction included in their education, but most aren't getting it.

An overwhelming majority of teens (94%) say that schools should be required to teach media literacy. Fully 57% offer strong support, saying schools should “definitely” have such a requirement, and another 36% offer some support, saying schools should have a requirement in some cases.

Despite widespread support among teens, we found little evidence that schools were already providing media literacy instruction. Only 39% of teens report having had any media literacy instruction in at least one class during the 2023-24 school year.

2. Regardless of age, teens struggle to distinguish between different types of information.

Half of teens can identify a branded content article as an advertisement, 52% can identify an article with “commentary” in the headline as an opinion and 59% can recognize that Google search results under the label “sponsored” indicate paid advertising. But less than 2 in 10 teens (18%) correctly answered all three questions asking them to distinguish between different types of information.

Results were not significantly different by age groups, meaning older teens are generally no better at demonstrating this foundational news literacy skill than younger teens.

3. Nearly half of teens think the press does more to harm democracy than protect it.

Just over half of teens (55%) say that journalists do more to protect democracy, while 45% say journalists do more to harm democracy. Two groups stand out as being particularly likely to say journalists protect democracy: teens who actively seek out news to stay informed (68%) and teens with high trust in news media (82%).



4. About two-thirds of teens are not concerned about the sharp decline in the number of news organizations in recent decades.

Sixty-seven percent of teens say they are a little or not at all concerned about the sharp decline in the number of news organizations in the U.S. over the last 20 years. Among teens who don't really keep up with news, 78% say they are a little or not at all concerned about the sharp decline. Similarly, 74% of those with low trust in news media say the same.

5. Many teens are at least somewhat trusting of news media, but still perceive high levels of bias in the news.

Most teens (65%) gave at least some trusting responses to the three survey questions that make up our news media trust index; however, only 8% responded to all three questions with trusting responses. Teens who say they had at least some media literacy instruction in at least one class are especially likely to have at least some trust in news media (73% with medium or high trust).

The two questions that received the most distrusting responses from teens were both about news media bias. Nearly 7 in 10 teens (69%) believe that news organizations intentionally add bias to coverage to advance a specific perspective, and 8 in 10 say that the information that news organizations produce is either more biased than or about the same as other content creators online.

6. Most teens on social media encounter conspiracy theories and are inclined to believe one or more of them.

Eight in 10 teens on social media say they see posts that spread or promote conspiracy theories, but the frequency of their exposure varies. Twenty percent of teens who use social media report seeing these posts in their feeds daily, 31% report seeing them weekly and 29% report seeing them less than once a week.

Many of the conspiracy theories teens report seeing go well beyond harmless superstitions. They include narratives such as the Earth being flat, the 2020 election being rigged or stolen, and COVID-19 vaccines being dangerous.

While teens on social media aren't necessarily inclined to believe every conspiracy theory they encounter, an overwhelming majority of those who report seeing a conspiracy theory on social media (81%) say they are inclined to believe one or more of them.



7. Few teens are regular users of generative artificial intelligence technologies, and many are skeptical of the information they produce.

Less than one quarter of teens (23%) say they use generative AI chatbots, such as ChatGPT, Gemini or Copilot, once a week or more. Even fewer teens (9%) report using AI image generators, such as DALL-E, Midjourney, DreamStudio or Gemini, once a week or more. These findings challenge the notion that AI tools have already upended the way young people approach schoolwork.

When asked if they trust generative AI chatbots to produce information that is accurate and fair, many teens were skeptical. Only 36% of teens report having at least a fair amount of trust in these tools to generate accurate information, while half of teens report having little to no trust in the accuracy and fairness of these AI tools.

8. While few teens tend to seek out news, those who do are more likely to also have other healthy news habits.

When it comes to news habits, only 15% of teens say they actively seek out news to stay informed. Most teens say they either keep up with news without really trying (50%) or don't really keep up with news (36%).

Being an active news seeker is associated with other healthy news literacy practices. Teens who actively seek out news and use social media are especially likely to follow more journalists and news organizations and frequently like, share and post about issues or events in the news.

Those active news seekers who like, share or post about news on social media are also more likely to say they always fact-check content before doing so. And, finally, being an active news seeker is associated with engaging in one or more civic-minded activities, such as referencing credible sources when sharing an opinion and reaching out to a journalist or news outlet to offer feedback on a story.



Introduction



American teens spend an average of nearly five hours a day on social media (Rothwell, 2023). This isn't entirely surprising, since these platforms are designed to be enticing and endlessly engaging. Billions of people scroll through personalized streams of content on these platforms, immersing themselves in a torrential — and often confusing — mix of entertainment, ads, news, rumors and more. The temptation to keep scrolling is not accidental; it's intentional and fueled by a constant influx of new content that is distributed by algorithms designed to target each user with more of what they find engaging. Sometimes the algorithms even steer users toward posts that spread harmful falsehoods or conspiracy theories. In such a complex information environment, it is crucial for young people to have the knowledge, skills and habits of mind necessary to assess the credibility and authenticity of the information they're seeing, and to easily access quality, standards-based news and information whenever they need it.

In this inaugural [News Literacy in America report](#), we engaged SSRS to survey 1,110 American teenagers ages 13-18 to learn about their information attitudes, habits and skills and assess the state of news literacy education in the United States. While polls and reports published in recent years have revealed important insights into the media habits of 13- to 18-year-olds, this report adds detail and specificity on news literacy topics, such as:

- » *What are teens' attitudes toward the press and its role in democracy?*
- » *What do they make of allegations of bias directed at news organizations?*
- » *How often are they exposed to conspiracy theories online?*

- » *How vulnerable are they to common forms of viral misinformation?*
- » *Can they accurately evaluate the credibility of information sources?*

By answering these questions and more, we hope to inform educators and policymakers as they weigh how to best integrate news literacy in schools — and to help journalists and researchers better understand young people's needs in this area. Our recommendations are calls to action designed to ensure that students have the knowledge and ability to participate in civic society as well-informed, critical thinkers by the time they graduate high school.

What is news literacy?

News literacy is a foundational element of media literacy education that prepares students to be well-informed, critical thinkers who know how to determine the credibility of news and other information. It also promotes an understanding of the role that credible information and a free press play in their lives and in a robust democracy. Practitioners of news literacy recognize the proliferation of misinformation and the erosion of trust in news media as existential threats to democracy — and are working to bolster our collective ability to defend and strengthen our democracy in the face of these threats.

The News Literacy Project has developed the following **five standards** that define the core competencies for high-quality news literacy teaching and learning:

1

STANDARD 1: INFORMATION TYPE

Students distinguish news from other types of information and can recognize both traditional and nontraditional advertisements.

2

STANDARD 2: FREE PRESS

Students acknowledge the importance of the First Amendment in American democracy and a free press to an informed public.

3

STANDARD 3: CREDIBILITY

Students understand why professional and ethical standards are necessary to produce quality journalism, and they can apply understanding of those standards to discern credible information and sources for themselves.

4

STANDARD 4: VERIFY, ANALYZE AND EVALUATE

Students demonstrate increased critical habits of mind, including effective verification skills and the ability to detect misinformation and faulty evidence.

5

STANDARD 5: CITIZENSHIP

Students express and exercise civic responsibility by seeking, sharing and producing credible information as effective participants in a democracy.

We utilized these standards [as a framework](#) to help shape the survey questions and structure this report. In the **findings section**, the survey results are aligned with each of the standards.

Teens and news media habits

Where we get news and information matters because the practice of news literacy is, by its very nature, contextual (Swart, 2023). For example, knowing how to spot an advertisement on a website doesn't necessarily mean you will know how to identify one on a social media app. Since what it means to engage news literacy skills shifts depending on our media context, it's important to know within which media contexts teens are spending their time.

Previous research tells us that social media platforms and video-sharing sites with social media features play an important role in the news and information habits of young people. Surveys have consistently shown that teens and young adults get news and information primarily from social media and do so in greater numbers than previous generations (AP-NORC, 2022; Auxier & Arbanas, 2022; UNICEF Innocenti, 2023). The platforms teens and young adults are most likely to get news and information from tend to include YouTube, TikTok and Instagram (AP-NORC, 2022; Pew Research Center, 2023; Robb, 2020; Wise, 2022).

Although it's clear that social media is an overwhelmingly popular information source for young people, we are still learning how often and where teens are encountering or seeking out news produced by journalists and news organizations. Surveys and other research studies that aim to learn more about how people get news tend to either lump together "news" and "information" or leave the definition of "news" up to the interpretation of the study participants. This lack of specificity can make results difficult to interpret, given how broad and varying understandings of the term "news" can be today.

News-ness, or "the extent to which audiences characterize a specific piece of media as news" (Edgerly & Vraga, 2020, p. 420), can be affected by a myriad of factors including the topic, tone, framing, source and context. In today's media environment, where genre blending is more ubiquitous and trends like infotainment are popular, there may be

even greater variations in what people consider to be news than what we've seen in the past.

Further complicating the work of understanding teen news habits today is that even a slight change in wording can mean something entirely different to different individuals. For example, recent data suggests that young adults distinguish between “news” and “the news” (Collao, 2022; Newman et al., 2022). “The news” is narrower in scope, “defined as (mainly) politics and current affairs. It is the preserve of mainstream news brands, who are expected to act impartially and objectively” (Collao, 2022, p. 4). “News,” on the other hand, is broader in scope, defined as “any news that is happening in any walk of life: sports, entertainment, celebrity gossip, current affairs, culture, arts, technology, etc.” and can include content and commentary by celebrities, social media influencers and podcast hosts who are not affiliated with mainstream news media brands (Collao, 2022, p. 15).

To try to mitigate any confusion over what “news” refers to in relevant survey questions, we used the phrase “news produced by professional journalists and the organizations they work for.” While there is some evidence suggesting that whether or how we choose to define “news” in survey questions may not have a statistically significant effect on self-reported news habits (Barthel et al., 2020), we decided to include this additional definition, when possible, to encourage a more precise, shared understanding of the term across survey-takers.

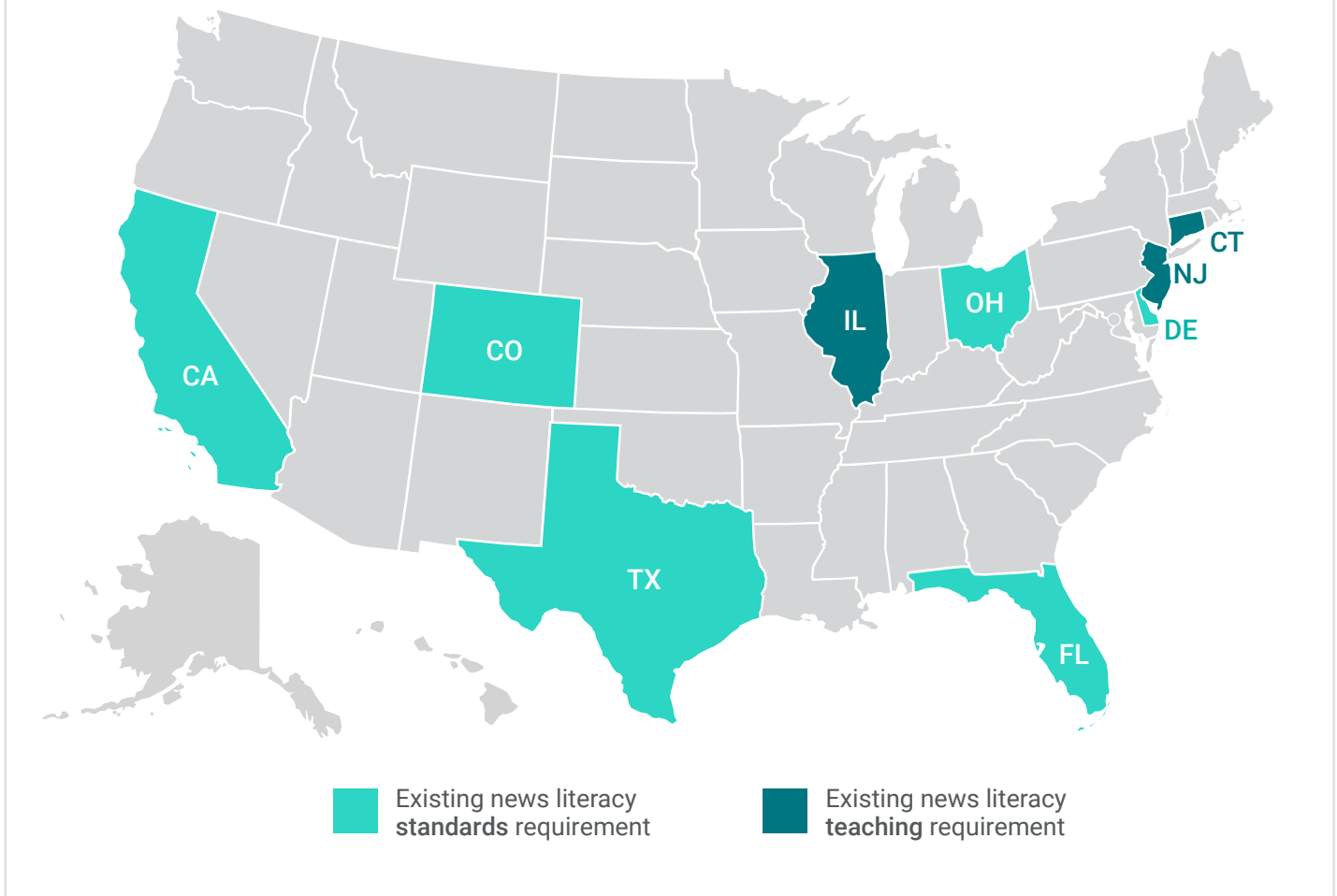
Teens and news media trust

It is well documented that trust in news media has been on a downward trend in the U.S. — at least among adults. A 2023 Gallup poll showed that only 32% of Americans have a great deal or a fair amount of trust and confidence in the mass media to report news “fully, accurately and fairly,” down from 54% 20 years prior (Brenan, 2023). The 2024 Reuters Digital News Report similarly showed that only 32% of Americans trust “most news most of the time” (p. 25). It is important to learn whether teens are similarly distrusting of news media and, if so, what might be at the root of

that distrust. Because institutional trust can involve many different factors, we went beyond asking about general feelings of trust or distrust in our survey by asking instead about specific factors involved in news media trust, such as fairness, accuracy and impartiality. By doing so, we were able to dig deeper into the concept of news media trust to learn what might be affecting teens’ degree of trust or distrust.

The information environment is radically different than it was just 20 years ago, due in large part to the dramatic rise of social media usage. It’s important to understand the impact of this on teens’ attitudes toward legacy, standards-based news outlets and the role they play in American democracy. The rise in social media usage (Rainie, 2018) and the decline in news media trust (Brenan, 2023) both coincide with a dramatic shrinking of the supply of standards-based news. About a third of local newspapers across the U.S. have closed since 2005 (Abernathy, 2023). Results from a 2022 Pew Research survey show that when surveying young people, it’s becoming increasingly important to consider the role that social media plays as an information source when asking about trusted sources. Their results showed that 18- to 29-year-olds “are now almost as likely to trust information from social media sites as they are to trust information from national news outlets,” and trust in information from local news outlets is not much higher (Liedke and Gottfried, 2022). There is also some evidence that teens may trust local and/or TV news more than other sources of news, including newspapers (Robb, 2020; Wise, 2022). To build on these findings, we decided to use an open-ended question approach to better understand which news sources teens trust the most.

News Literacy Education Landscape



As of July 2024.

The state of news literacy education

It can be incredibly challenging for anyone, let alone young people, to identify accurate, quality information in today's information environment. The knowledge, skills and habits of mind needed to do this on a regular basis are not something that adolescents naturally pick up on just by frequently engaging with digital media. The good news is that news literacy can be taught. Researchers have shown significant student learning gains after implementing even brief news and media literacy interventions (Kohnen et al., 2020; McGrew, 2020; McGrew & Breakstone, 2023).

The bad news is that very few states require that news and media literacy be taught in schools. According to Media Literacy Now, while 19 states have taken some legislative action to elevate K-12 media literacy education, only eight states require that media literacy instruction be included in at least some K-12 classrooms (McNeill, 2024). We further analyzed the language of each of these legislative actions and found that, of those 19 states, as few as nine have included language in their media literacy legislation that is inclusive of news literacy. As of now, just three of those nine states (Connecticut, Illinois and New Jersey) explicitly require that news literacy instruction be included in at least

some classrooms, and in one of those three states (Connecticut) the requirement goes into effect in 2025.

Even in states with media literacy legislation, there is still more work to be done to ensure that media and news literacy are being integrated into curriculum and instruction at the classroom level. A recent survey of media literacy educators by the National Association for Media Literacy Education revealed that almost half were not aware of whether their state or district had passed media literacy legislation (Fromm, 2024). Even when educators teach in states or districts that prioritize media literacy and are aware of those initiatives, mandates or requirements, they may still lack the training needed to be successful. In the same survey, a shocking 77% of educators selected “self-taught” when asked to identify the ways in which they received training in media literacy education (Fromm, 2024).

The patchwork of state media literacy legislation coupled with the lack of awareness of those policies and institutional support makes it unlikely that students are fully prepared to responsibly navigate, engage with and contribute to the news and information landscape by the time they graduate and become eligible to vote. In 2019, the Stanford History Education Group (now known as the Digital Inquiry Group) surveyed thousands of high school students on six civic online reasoning tasks and summarized the results as “troubling” (Breakstone et al., 2019, p. 3). In our survey, we continue exploring the state of media literacy education by asking teens about their experiences with media literacy in the classroom and by seeing how they performed on a series of fundamental news literacy tasks.



Findings

This data was collected via a nationally representative survey conducted between May 17 and May 28, 2024, with a sample of 1,110 teens ages 13-18. The margin of error for the entire sample is ± 4.1 percentage points,

but margins of error for subgroups will be larger. We analyzed all data by four subgroups: media literacy exposure, news habit, trust in news media and age. Data related to news habit and trust in news media were also analyzed by race/ethnicity and gender.

For additional details, please see the methods section of the report.

- **MEDIA LITERACY IN SCHOOLS**
- **NLP STANDARD 1:** Information type
- **NLP STANDARD 2:** Free press
- **NLP STANDARD 3:** Credibility
- **NLP STANDARD 4:** Verify, analyze and evaluate
- **NLP STANDARD 5:** Citizenship





Media literacy in schools



(Key Finding)

Teens want media literacy instruction included in their education, but most aren't getting it.

94%

say that schools should be required to teach media literacy.

Only 39%

report having had any media literacy instruction in at least one class during the 2023-24 school year.



Media Literacy in Schools

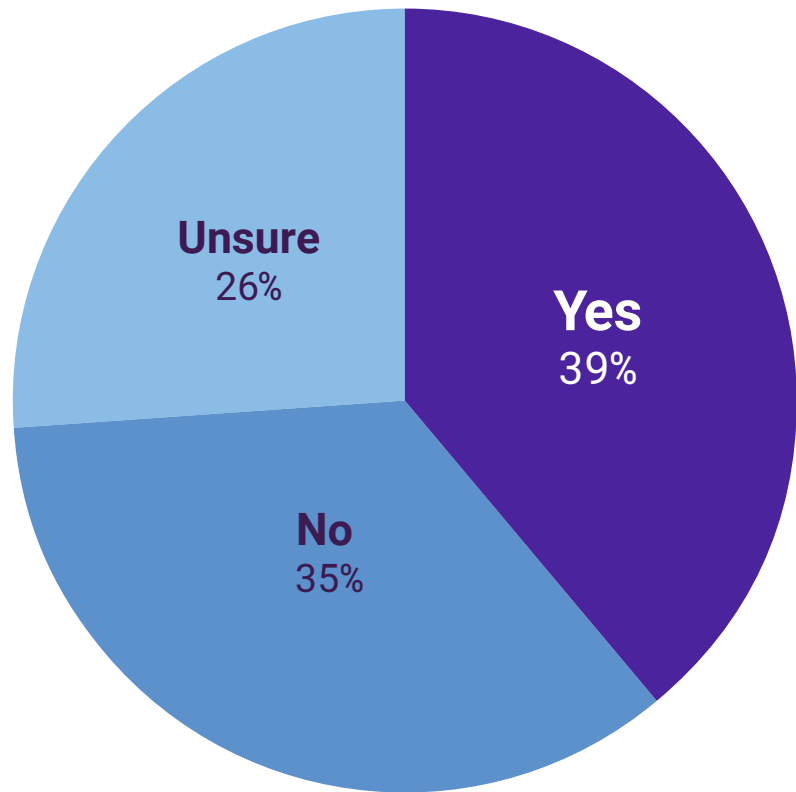
Just over a third of teens say they had at least one class with any media literacy instruction during the 2023-24 school year.

News and media literacy policy initiatives in the U.S. are still in their infancy. We asked teenagers both about their experiences in this current policy landscape and about their attitudes regarding the need for media literacy education in schools.

To assess the extent to which teenagers are receiving media literacy instruction, we asked them if any of their classes during the 2023-24 school year included any degree of media literacy instruction, such as how to tell the difference between credible information and misinformation. The results indicate that receiving media literacy instruction is not yet the norm. Only 39% of teens report having had classes that included any media literacy instruction during the school year. The other 61% say either their classes did not include media literacy instruction, or they were not sure if they did.

Only 39% of teens say their classes included any media literacy instruction during the 2023-24 school year

Have any of your classes at school this year included any media literacy instruction?



Note: Results based on the 1,109 teens who responded to this question.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



Teens who identify as active seekers of news and those who report higher trust in news media are more likely to report having had classes with any media literacy instruction during the 2023-24 school year compared to their peers. Forty-seven percent of teens who actively seek out news say they had at least some media literacy instruction, compared with 34% of teens who don't keep up with news. Fifty-one percent of teens with

high trust in news media and 43% with medium trust say they had at least some media literacy instruction, compared with 30% with low trust in news media.

There are no significant differences in media literacy exposure by age.

Exposure to media literacy instruction, by news habit and news media trust

Notes: Results based on the 1,109 teens who responded to this question. Items may not sum exactly to 100% due to rounding. The news media trust index is built on questions about teens' trust or distrust of whether news organizations take journalism standards seriously, their view of whether news organizations try to minimize or add bias to reporting, and their sense of whether news organizations are more or less biased than other content creators. For additional details, see "NLP News Literacy Standard 3."

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

Have any of your classes at school this year included any media literacy instruction?

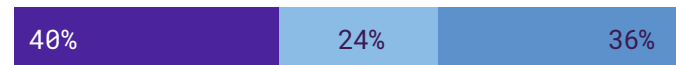
■ Yes ■ Unsure ■ No

by NEWS HABIT

Actively seek out news



News finds me



Don't keep up with news



by NEWS MEDIA TRUST INDEX

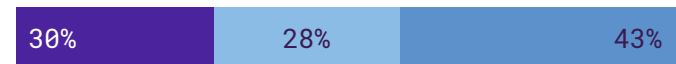
High trust



Medium trust



Low trust





An overwhelming majority of teens say that schools should be required to teach media literacy.

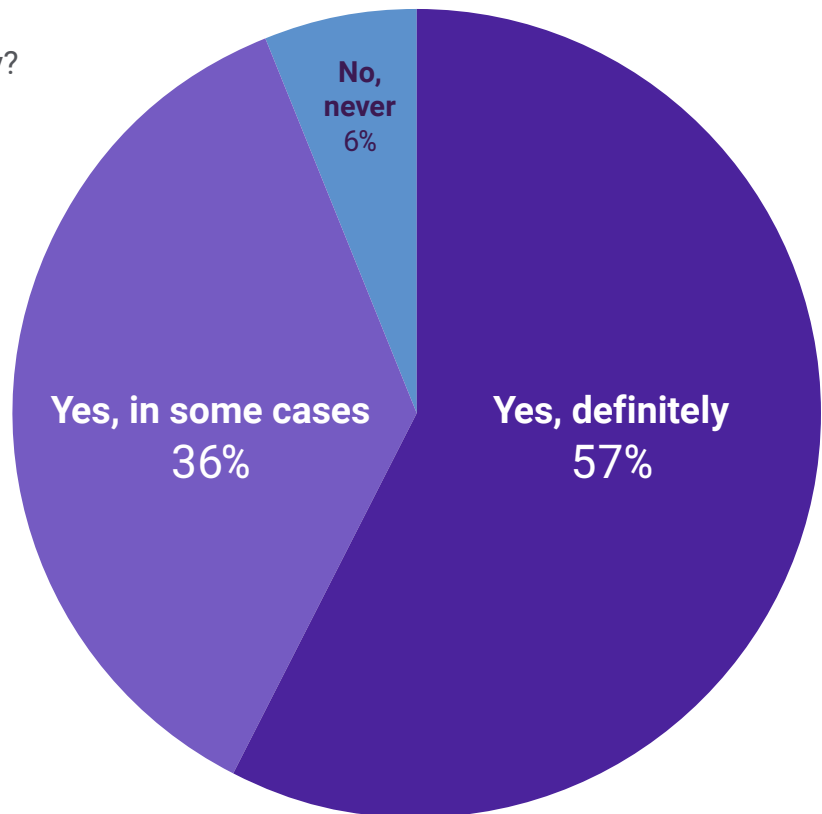
Regardless of their classroom history with media literacy, teens are overwhelmingly in favor of having it be a more prominent part of their school curriculum. The majority (94%) say that schools should be required to teach media literacy in at least some cases. Over

half of teens (57%) offer strong support, saying that schools should “definitely” have such a requirement.

Although teens across all subgroups indicate broad support for media literacy in schools, there are a few groups that are especially likely to be strong supporters, saying that schools should “definitely” have a media literacy requirement. Teens who keep up with news without trying (i.e., “news finds me”) are more likely to

Overwhelming majority of teens say they support media literacy requirement for schools

Do you think schools should be required to teach media literacy?



Notes: Results based on the 1,108 teens who responded to this question. Items may not sum exactly to 100% due to rounding.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



be strong supporters of a media literacy requirement in schools than teens who don't keep up with news (62% vs. 50%). Teens with high trust in news media are also more likely to indicate stronger support than their low-trust peers. Seventy-one percent of teens with high trust in news media say they "definitely" support a media literacy requirement, compared with 55% of teens with low trust in news media.

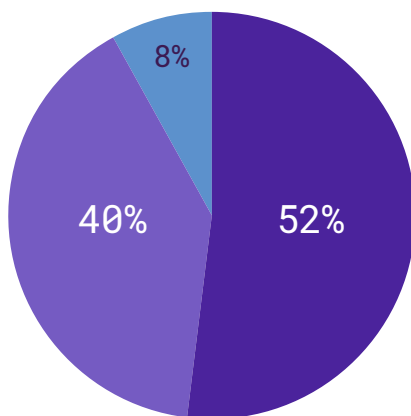
Older teens are also more likely to indicate stronger support for a media literacy requirement than younger teens. Sixty-six percent of 17- and 18-year-olds say they "definitely" support a news literacy requirement in schools, compared with 54% of 15- and 16-year-olds and 52% of 13- and 14-year-olds.



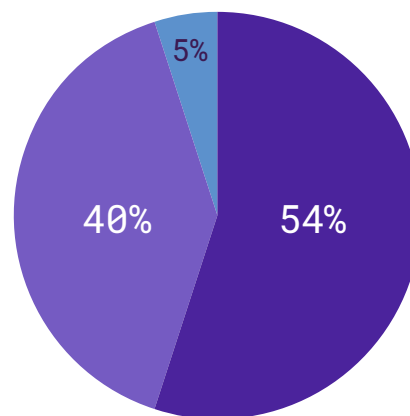
Support for media literacy requirement, by age group

Do you think schools should be required to teach media literacy?

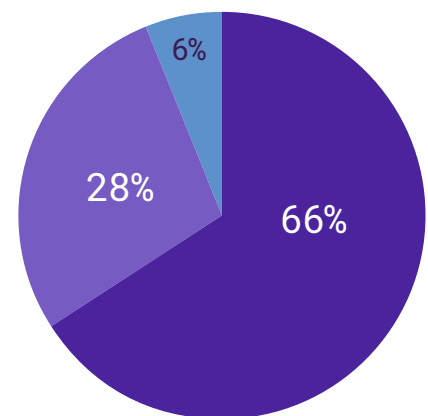
■ Yes, definitely
 ■ Yes, in some cases
 ■ No, never



Ages 13-14



Ages 15-16



Ages 17-18

Notes: Results based on the 1,108 teens who responded to this question. Items may not sum exactly to 100% due to rounding.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



INFORMATION TYPE

NLP NEWS LITERACY STANDARD

1

Students distinguish news from other types of information and can recognize both traditional and nontraditional advertisements.



(Key Finding)

Regardless of age, teens struggle to distinguish between different types of information.

18%

correctly answered all three questions asking them to distinguish between different types of information.



NLP News Literacy Standard 1: Information Type

Many teens struggle to distinguish between different types of information.

Different types of information are created in different ways for different purposes, meanings and effects. To measure teenagers' ability to distinguish between types of information, we presented them with a series of three tasks.

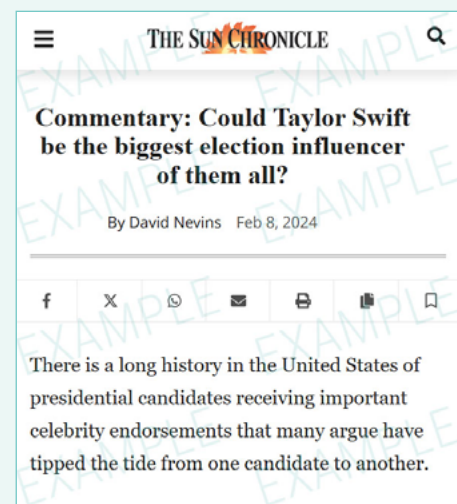
The first two tasks followed the same format: Survey takers were presented with a screenshot of the top of an article and then asked to select the article's information type (news, opinion, advertisement or entertainment).

TASK 1

The first article was [a piece of branded content published by The Washington Post's WP BrandStudio](#) and the screenshot included the labels "WP BrandStudio" and "Content from Safeway." Even with these labels, only half of 13- to 18-year-olds (50%) correctly identified this article as an advertisement.

TASK 2

The second article was [an op-ed \(opinion piece\) published in The Sun Chronicle](#) (based in Attleboro, Massachusetts) about entertainer Taylor Swift's potential to influence the outcome of the 2024 presidential election, and the screenshot included the word "Commentary" in the article title. "Commentary" — along with labels like "opinion," "op-ed" and "editorial" — are commonly used by news organizations to indicate that a piece is opinion rather than a news report. Despite the use of this label in the headline, only about half of teens (52%) accurately identified this article as an opinion.

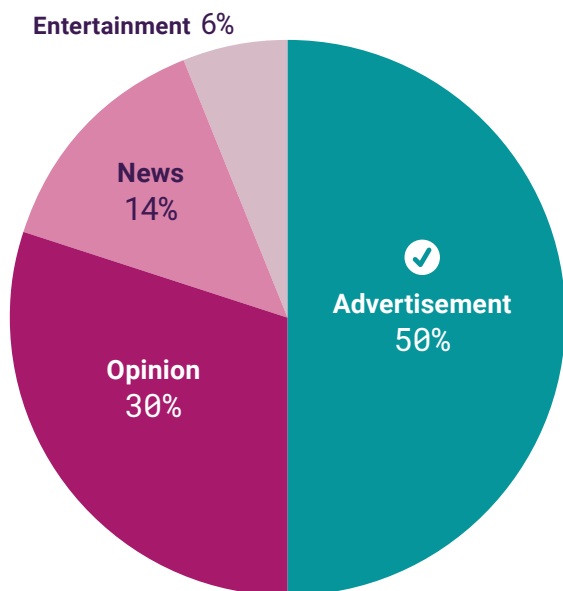




TASK 1

Half of teens do not recognize a branded content example as an advertisement

This article is best categorized as which type of information?

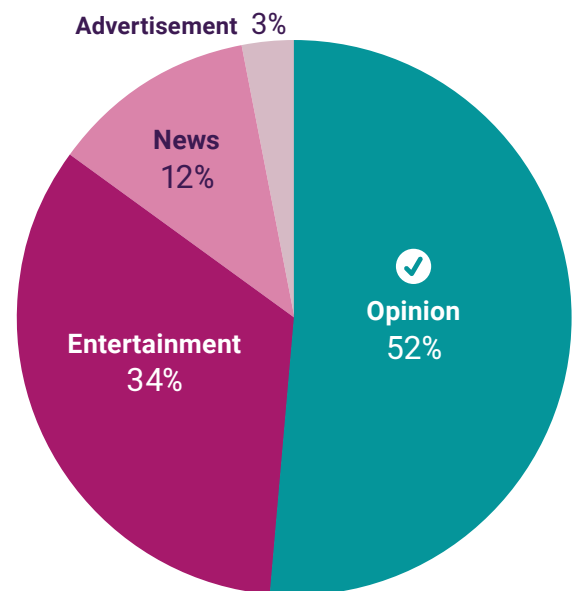


Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

TASK 2

About half of teens do not recognize an op-ed as an opinion piece

This article is best categorized as which type of information?



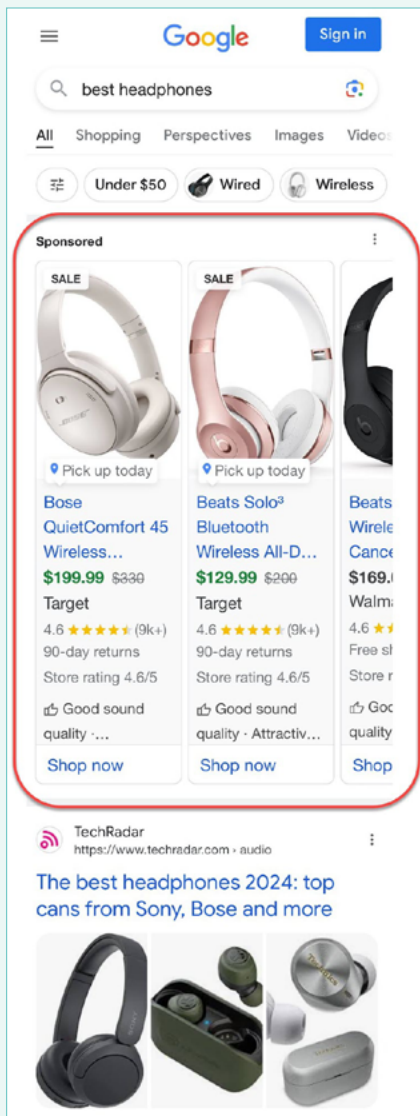
Note: Items may not sum exactly to 100% due to rounding.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



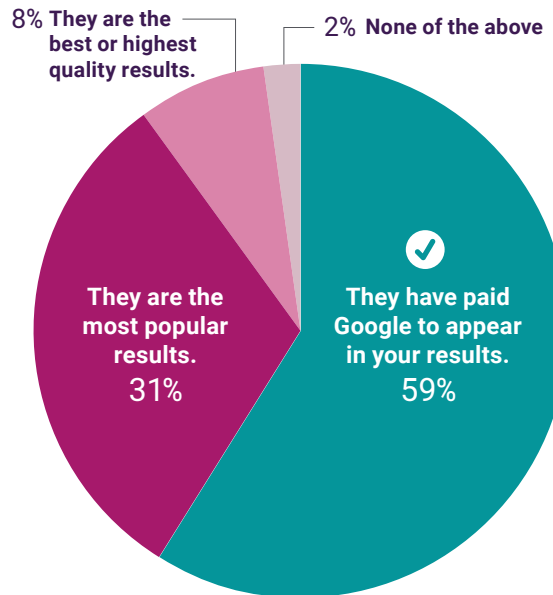
TASK 3

The third task presented a screenshot of Google search results for “best headphones” and asked students to identify why the top results were featured first. These top results were all included under the heading “Sponsored,” which is a common way to label paid advertising. While teens did the best on this third task, still only 59% correctly identified these as advertisements that companies paid to be featured in Google search results.



About 4 in 10 teens do not recognize sponsored search results as paid advertising

You type “best headphones” into Google and see these top results. Why did these results appear first?



Note: Results based on the 1,109 teens who responded to this question.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



Few teens were able to consistently distinguish between information types across three tasks.

Looking across all three tasks designed to measure the ability to distinguish between information types, a majority of teens (70%) gave correct answers on one or two tasks. Few (18%) correctly answered all three questions.

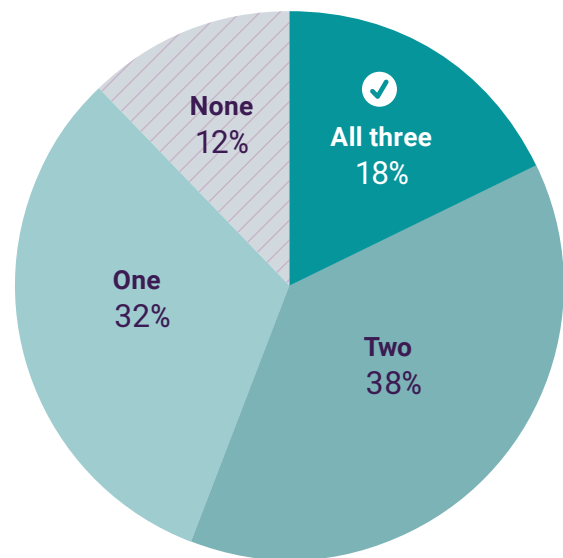
Although there are no significant differences by media literacy exposure or news habit on teen performance on these tasks, there is one notable difference by news media trust. Interestingly, teens with low trust in news media perform better than their medium- and high-trust peers on identifying sponsored content as paid advertising (70% vs. 53% and 52%, respectively).

There are no significant differences in results across age groups. Older teens are generally no better at correctly identifying information types than younger teens.



Less than 2 in 10 teens gave all correct answers when asked to distinguish between information types

% of teens who correctly answered ___ of three questions designed to measure the ability to distinguish between information types



Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



FREE PRESS

NLP NEWS LITERACY STANDARD **2**

Students acknowledge the importance of the First Amendment in American democracy and a free press to an informed public.



(Key Findings)

Nearly half of teens think the press does more to harm democracy than to protect it.

About two-thirds of teens are not concerned about the sharp decline in the number of news organizations in recent decades.

Also in this section:

- » Knowledge of First Amendment freedoms
- » Ranking U.S. press freedoms



NLP News Literacy Standard 2:

Free Press

The Five Freedoms

Teens know most First Amendment freedoms, but few can identify all five.

The five freedoms protected by the First Amendment empower responsible, productive civic discourse in American democracy. We presented teens with two questions to test their knowledge of the First Amendment.

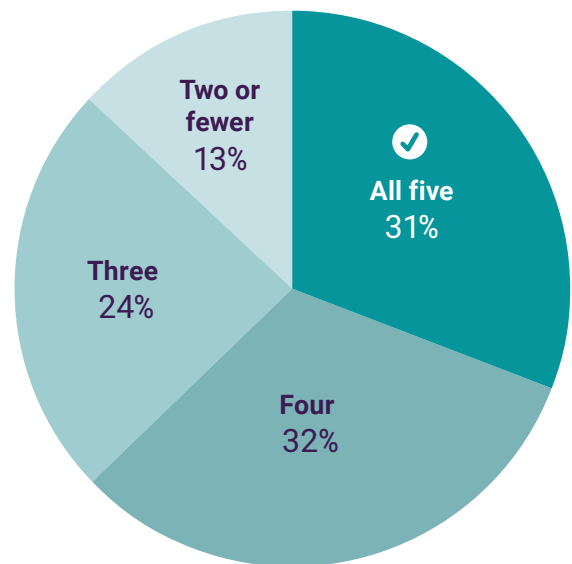
The first question asked respondents to pick out the five freedoms protected by the First Amendment from a list of 10 options. Roughly 1 in 3 teens (31%) can identify all five freedoms (freedom of religion, speech, press, assembly and petition).

Almost all teens (98%) can identify freedom of speech as a First Amendment freedom. A majority also can identify freedom of religion (88%), the press (78%) and to assemble (68%); however, less than half can identify freedom to petition (48%). The freedom to vote and freedom of choice were the most popular incorrect responses.

When looking at the percentages of teens who correctly identified each First Amendment freedom, there are no meaningful differences by media literacy exposure, news habit, news media trust or age.

About two-thirds of teens failed to identify all five freedoms protected by the First Amendment

% of teens who correctly identified ___ First Amendment freedoms



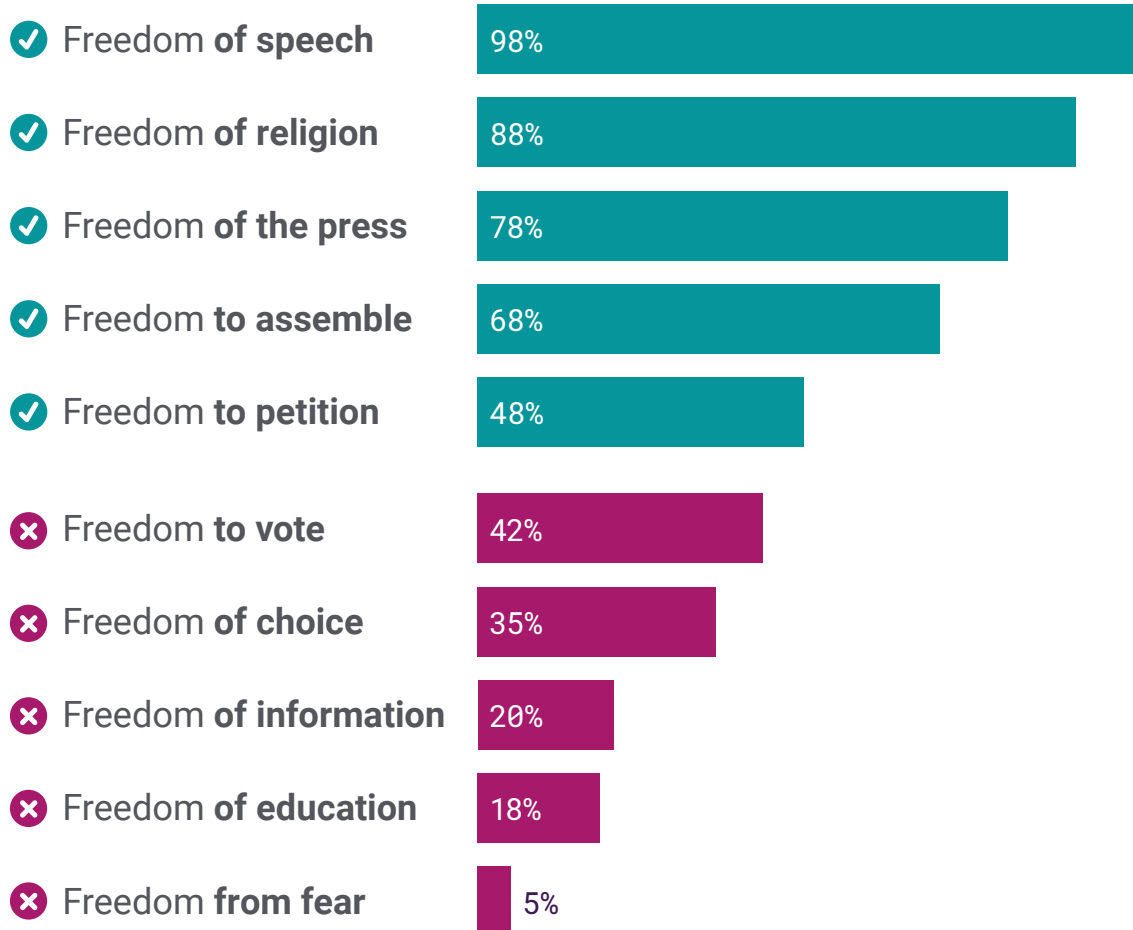
Note: Results based on the 1,108 teens who responded to this question.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



Knowledge of First Amendment freedoms

What are the five freedoms protected by the First Amendment? (Select 5)



Notes: Results based on the 1,108 teens who responded to this question. Results do not sum to 100% because multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



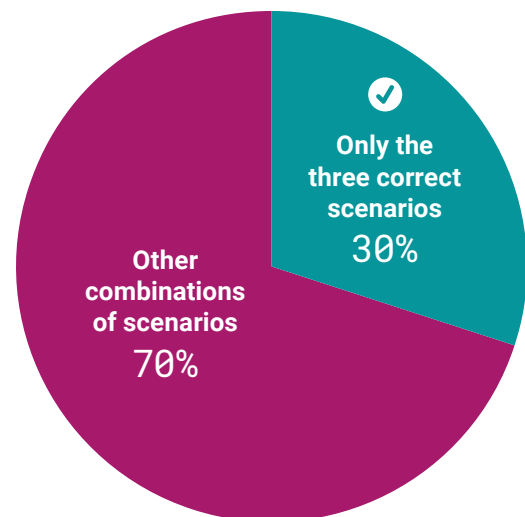
Less than a third of teens can correctly identify scenarios that describe clear violations of First Amendment protections.

The second question measured the ability to apply First Amendment freedoms to specific scenarios by asking teens to select all the scenarios that violate First Amendment freedoms. Roughly 1 in 3 (30%) can identify all three scenarios (and only these three) that would violate the First Amendment:

- » *“Protesters are arrested when gathering peacefully and without disruption in a public place.”*
- » *“A journalist is arrested as punishment for reporting evidence of corruption in the government.”*
- » *“Students are suspended for refusing to say the Pledge of Allegiance at a public high school.”*

Roughly 1 in 3 teens correctly identified all three scenarios that violate the First Amendment

% of teens who selected...



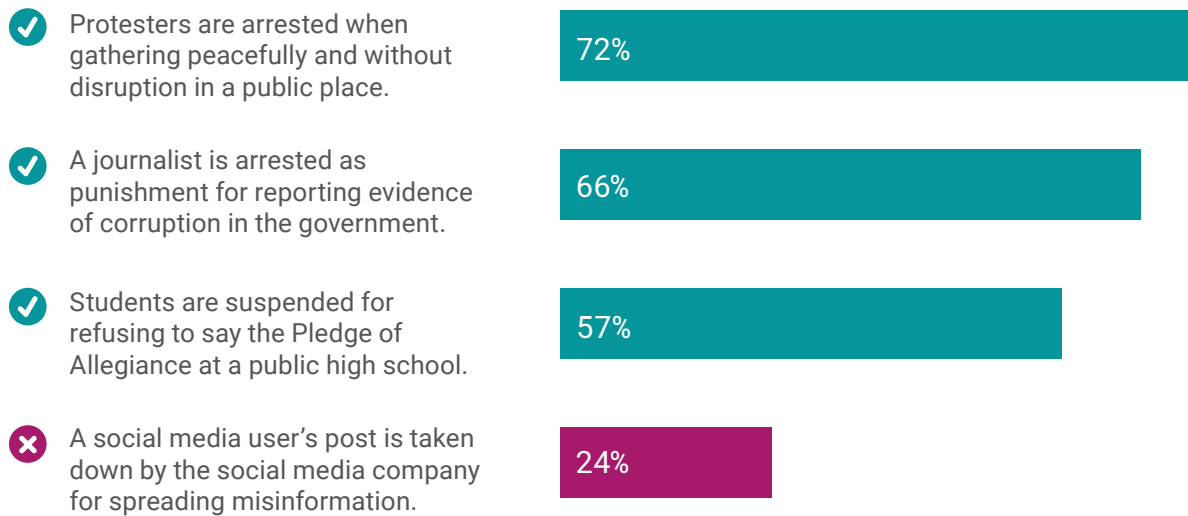
Note: Results based on the 1,108 teens who responded to this question.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



Recognition of clear violations of First Amendment protections

Which of the following scenarios violate the First Amendment?
Please select all that apply.



Notes: Results based on the 1,108 teens who responded to this question. Results do not sum to 100% because multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

Interestingly, of these three scenarios, the one that is most likely to involve adolescents (refusing to say the pledge) has the lowest awareness among teens (57%) as a clear violation of their First Amendment rights. Teens with at least some media literacy instruction during the 2023-24 school year are more likely to correctly recognize this scenario as a First Amendment issue than those without any media literacy instruction (67% vs. 52%).

While there are no significant differences in the knowledge of First Amendment violations by news habit,

there is one notable difference by news media trust. Teens with low trust in news media are almost twice as likely as teens with high trust to incorrectly identify that social media companies taking down user posts is a violation of constitutional rights (29% vs. 15%).

There are no significant differences in results between age groups: Older teens are generally no better at identifying violations of First Amendment freedoms than younger teens.



The Role of a Free Press

Almost half of teens say journalists do more to harm democracy than to protect it.

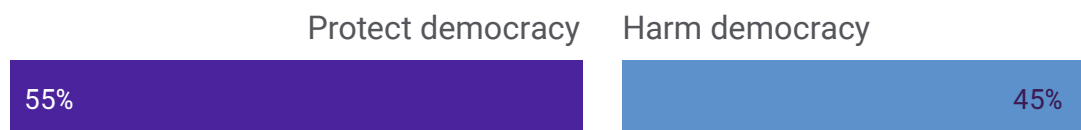
The First Amendment's protection of press freedoms is essential to democracy, enabling news media to act as watchdogs that protect the public interest. It prohibits the government from punishing journalists who expose corruption and wrongdoing by public officials and other powerful figures. We asked teens three questions to learn more about how they understand the state of the press and press freedoms in the U.S.

When it comes to their views on the impact that journalists and news organizations in the U.S. have on our democracy, just over half of teens (55%) say that journalists do more to protect democracy, while 45% say journalists do more to harm democracy.

Views about the impact journalists have on democracy differed by both news habit and news media trust. Sixty-eight percent of teens who actively seek out news have a positive opinion of the impact of journalists on democracy, compared with 53% of teens who keep up with news without trying (i.e., "news finds me") or 51% of teens who don't keep up with news.

45% of teens say journalists do more to harm democracy than protect it

Would you say that professional journalists and the organizations they work for in the United States are doing more to...



Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



Views on the impact of journalists on democracy, by news habit and news media trust

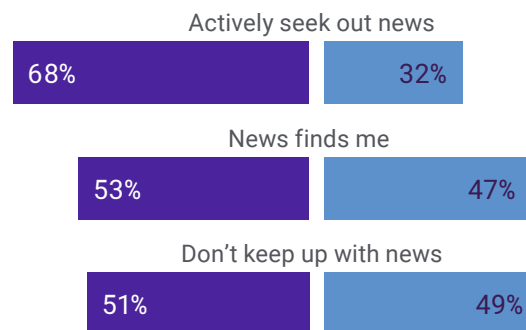
Note: The news media trust index is built on questions about teens' trust or distrust of whether news organizations take journalism standards seriously, their view of whether news organizations try to minimize or add bias to reporting, and their sense of whether news organizations are more or less biased than other content creators. For additional details, see "NLP News Literacy Standard 3."

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

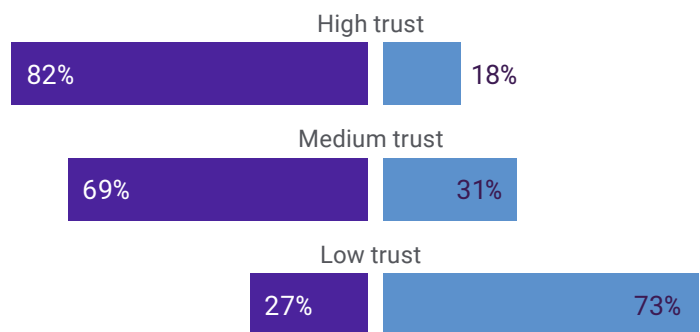
Would you say that professional journalists and the organizations they work for in the United States are doing more to...

■ Protect democracy ■ Harm democracy

by NEWS HABIT



by NEWS MEDIA TRUST INDEX



Unsurprisingly, teens with low trust in news media are much more likely to say that journalists do more to harm democracy than teens with medium or high trust (73% vs. 31% and 18%, respectively).

There are no significant differences in the views on this question by media literacy exposure or age.



Roughly two-thirds of teens not concerned about decline in number of news organizations

% of teens who say they are ___ concerned about the sharp decline in the number of news organizations in the United States over the last 20 years

Very Somewhat A little Not at all



Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

The majority of teens are not concerned about the sharp decline in the number of news organizations over the last couple of decades.

Over the last 20 years, there has been a sharp decline in the number of journalists and news organizations in the United States. When asked whether they are concerned about this trend, more than two-thirds of teens (67%) report that they are not (33% are only a little concerned and 34% are not at all concerned). Only 8% of teens report being very concerned.



Concern over sharp decline in number of news organizations, by news habit and news media trust

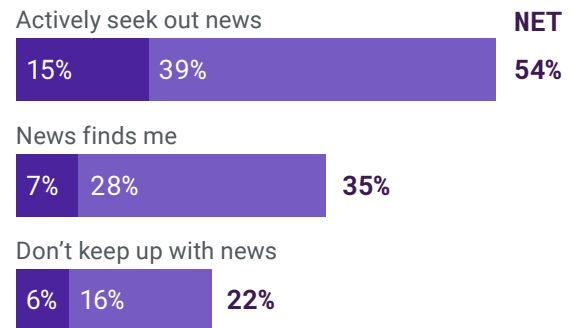
% of teens who say they are ___ about the sharp decline in the number of news organizations in the United States over the last 20 years

Very concerned Somewhat concerned

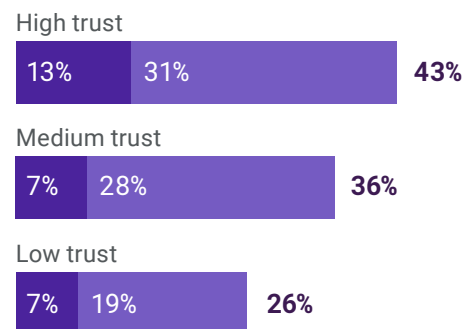
Note: The news media trust index is built on questions about teens' trust or distrust of whether news organizations take journalism standards seriously, their view of whether news organizations try to minimize or add bias to reporting, and their sense of whether news organizations are more or less biased than other content creators. For additional details, see "NLP News Literacy Standard 3."

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

by NEWS HABIT



by NEWS MEDIA TRUST INDEX



There are significant differences in concern over this sharp decline by both news habit and news media trust. Teens who actively seek out news are more likely to be concerned about the sharp decline in the number of news organizations over the last 20 years than teens who keep up with news without trying (i.e., "news finds me") and teens who don't keep up with news (54% vs. 35% and 22%, respectively). Teens with high and medium trust in news media are more likely than their low-trusting peers to be concerned about the decline (43% and 36%, respectively, vs. 26%).

Older teens are also more likely to express concern over this decline than the youngest teens. Thirty-eight percent of 17- and 18-year-olds are concerned about this trend, compared with 27% of 13- and 14-year-olds.

There are no significant differences in concern by media literacy exposure.



On average, teens slightly underestimate the degree of press freedoms in the U.S. relative to other countries.

Each year the nonprofit Reporters Without Borders ranks 180 countries from strongest to weakest in terms of their degree of press freedoms – the ability of journalists to report and share news without fear of interference or punishment. This year, the U.S. ranked as #55 out of 180 countries, down from #45 the year prior (Reporters Without Borders, 2024). We asked teens to tell us where they thought the U.S. ranked using this same scale (1-180, 1 being the country with the strongest press freedoms and 180 being the country with the weakest).

Only 14% of teens rank the U.S. within 10 countries of the Reporters Without Borders ranking in either direction. Thirty-six percent of teens rank U.S. press freedoms as somewhat or much stronger than they are, and 51% rank U.S. press freedoms as somewhat or much weaker than they are. The average (mean) teen ranking of the U.S. is #68 out of 180 countries, 13 places lower than the press freedom watchdog ranking.

There are no meaningful differences in press freedom ranking by media literacy exposure, news habit, news media trust or age.



More than 8 in 10 teens misjudge strength of U.S. press freedoms, compared with the 2024 Reporters Without Borders ranking

% of teens who ranked U.S. press freedoms as _____ [than/as] the 2024 Reporters Without Borders ranking

Much stronger
 Somewhat stronger
 About the same
 Somewhat weaker
 Much weaker



Notes: Results based on the 1,102 teens who responded to this question. Items may not sum exactly to 100% due to rounding. Rankings of 1-10 were categorized as "much stronger," rankings of 11-44 were categorized as "somewhat stronger," rankings of 45-65 were categorized as "close to/exactly," rankings of 66-100 were categorized as "somewhat weaker" and rankings of 101-180 were categorized as "much weaker."

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



CREDIBILITY

NLP NEWS LITERACY STANDARD 3

Students understand why professional and ethical standards are necessary to produce quality journalism, and they can apply understanding of those standards to discern credible information and sources for themselves.



(Key Finding)

Many teens are at least somewhat trusting of news media, but still perceive high levels of bias in the news.

Also in this section:

- » Trusted sources for news
- » Identifying credible sources



NLP News Literacy Standard 3: Credibility

A majority of teens think news media are no more impartial than other content creators and intentionally introduce bias when reporting.

Like many communities of professional practice, quality news organizations aspire to rigorous standards and ethical guidelines. In journalism, these standards and guidelines are designed to produce fair, accurate and timely information about newsworthy issues and events for the public. No source of information is perfect, but people and organizations that demonstrate a commitment to verification and other journalistic ideals — such as fairness, transparency and independence — are significantly more likely to produce credible information than those that do not. Despite the longstanding prevalence of these standards and values in newsrooms across the country, public trust in the press has been on the decline for decades.

We asked three questions to gauge teen trust in news media:

1. *How much, if at all, do you trust that professional journalists and the organizations they work for take accuracy and fairness seriously in their work?*
Just over half of teens (56%) say they have a great deal or a fair amount of trust in journalists to take these important journalism standards seriously in their work.
2. *Which of these statements comes closer to your own view, even if neither is exactly right: News organizations try to minimize bias OR they intentionally add bias to their coverage?*
Roughly 1 in 3 teens (31%) say that news organizations try to minimize bias and present all relevant facts in as straightforward, clear and impartial a manner as possible. The majority (69%) believe instead that news organizations intentionally add bias to their coverage and only present the facts that support their own perspective.

3. *Compared to other people who create content about current events, would you say that journalists tend to be more biased, less biased or about the same?*

Teens are more likely to say that journalists are more biased (35%) rather than less biased (20%) than other content creators. The remaining 45% believe that journalists demonstrate about the same amount of bias in their work as other content creators.

We then organized responses according to a scale of high trust (those who answered all three questions indicating trust in news media), medium trust (those who answered with a mixture of trust and distrust) and low trust (those who answered all three questions indicating distrust in news media).

8% of teens have **high trust** in news media. High-trust teens believe that journalists and news organizations take the standards of quality journalism seriously and genuinely aspire to be as unbiased — or both fair and accurate — in their coverage as possible.

56% of teens have **medium trust** in news media. These teens gave a mixture of trust and distrust responses to the three questions.

35% of teens have **low trust** in news media. Low-trust teens believe that journalists and news organizations do not take journalism standards such as accuracy and fairness seriously in their work and fail to produce information that is more impartial than other content creators online. In fact, they generally believe that journalists intentionally add bias to their coverage of events and issues.



Components of the news media trust index: Are journalists/news organizations trustworthy?

■ Trust ■ Distrust

% of teens who believe journalists and news organizations...

How much, if at all, do you trust that professional journalists and the organizations they work for take accuracy and fairness seriously in their work?

Take accuracy and fairness seriously
(at least a fair amount of trust)

56%

Don't take accuracy and fairness seriously
(not much or no trust)

44%

Would you say that news organizations try to minimize bias or intentionally add bias to their coverage?

Try to minimize bias

31%

Intentionally add bias

69%

Compared to other people who create content about current events, would you say that journalists tend to be more biased, less biased or about the same?

Are less biased compared
to other content creators

20%

Are more/equally biased compared
to other content creators

80%

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



Trust in news media, by media literacy exposure

% of teens who fall in the ___ trust in news media group

■ High ■ Medium ■ Low

by MEDIA LITERACY EXPOSURE

With media literacy



Without media literacy



Notes: Results for “With media literacy” are based on the 493 teens who said they had any classes with any media literacy instruction during the 2023-24 school year; results for “Without media literacy” are based on the 340 teens who said they did not have that instruction.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

Trust in news media, by news habit

% of teens who fall in the ___ trust in news media group

■ High ■ Medium ■ Low

by NEWS HABIT

Actively seek out news



News finds me



Don't keep up with news



Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

In addition to media literacy exposure, news habit and age, we also analyzed this data by gender and race/ethnicity to learn more about any demographic differences between each trust group. There are significant differences in news media trust by media literacy exposure, news habit and race/ethnicity in teens, but none by gender or age.

Teens without any media literacy instruction are more likely to have low trust in news media than their peers with at least some media literacy instruction (43% vs. 27%).

Teens who keep up with news without trying (i.e., “news finds me”) and those who don’t keep up with news are more likely to have low trust than teens who actively seek out news (36% and 43%, respectively, vs. 17%).



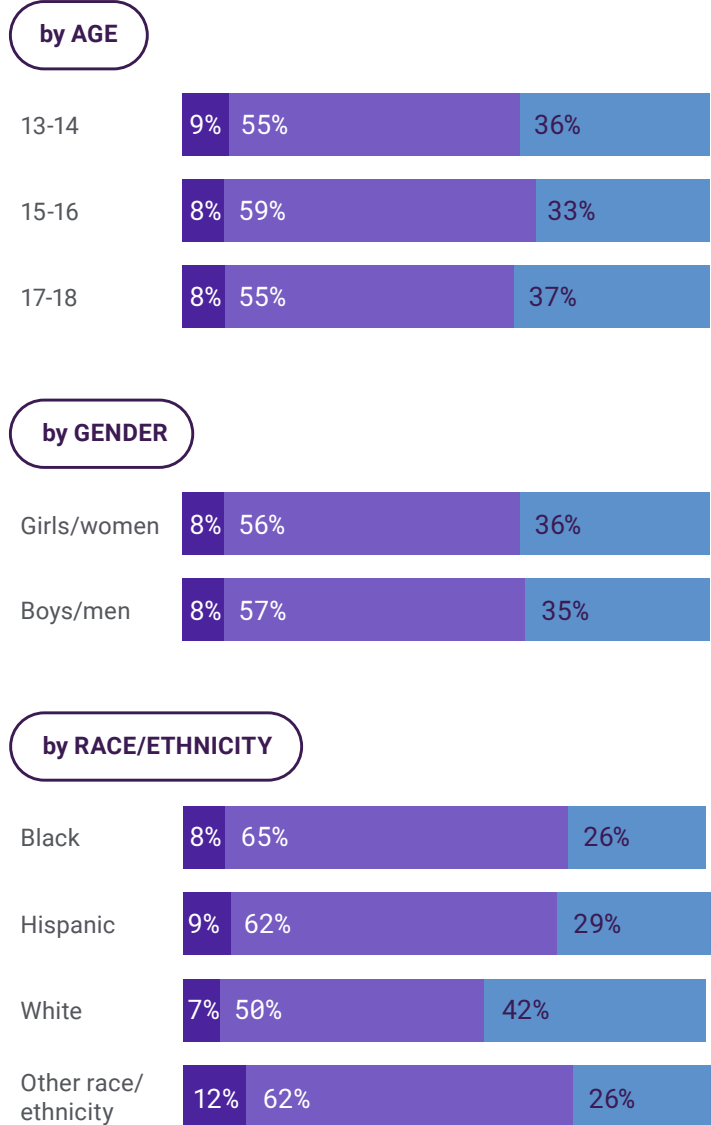
News media trust, by age, gender and race/ethnicity

% of teens who fall in the ___ trust in news media group

High
 Medium
 Low

Notes: Items may not sum exactly to 100% due to rounding.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



Only one significant demographic difference emerged relating to teen trust in news media: Forty-two percent of white teens have low trust in news media, compared with 26% of Black teens, 29% of Hispanic teens and 26% of teens who identify as another race/ethnicity.



CNN, local TV news, Fox News, TikTok and ABC News are named by the most teens as trusted sources for news.

We also asked teenagers to name which sources of news they trust the most to provide accurate and fair information. Results are based on the 1,104 teens who responded to this prompt. After splitting responses with multiple sources and removing invalid responses, such as “N/A,” or “I don’t know,” and responses without enough detail to categorize accurately, our final dataset included 1,312 sources mentioned. Responses included media outlets, formats and individuals, so we split the results here accordingly.

Respondents named a total of 91 different news and media outlets that they trust to provide accurate and fair information. Of those 91 outlets, only 14 were mentioned 10 or more times. The top five outlets teens trust are CNN, Fox News, ABC News, The New York Times and NBC News.

Interestingly, some of the outlets with 10 or more mentions are not generally focused on producing straight news reports, such as TMZ (a popular celebrity gossip site) and Newsmax (an openly partisan media outlet that primarily publishes political opinion commentary).

Sources teens trust the most, by news/media outlet

of mentions of sources teens trust the most to provide accurate and fair information

CNN	178
Fox News	133
ABC News	63
The New York Times	38
NBC News	38
CBS News	22
BBC	21
CNN	14
TMZ	12
Associated Press (AP)	12
NPR	12
The Washington Post	12
MSNBC	11
Newsmax	10

Notes: Results based on 723 sources mentioned that were categorized as news or media outlets. Only outlets with 10 or more mentions were included in this chart.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



Teens named a total of 23 different news and media formats that they trust to provide accurate and fair information. Of those 23 formats, 13 were mentioned 10 or more times. The top five formats teens trust the most are local TV news, TikTok, local news (unspecified media format: print, broadcast, digital, etc.), YouTube and TV news in general (local, national, network, cable or regional).

Local TV news was named more than twice as often as the next most-mentioned format, TikTok. When looking specifically at social media, respondents named TikTok, YouTube and Instagram most often.

Teens named a total of 56 individuals whom they trust to provide accurate and fair information, but only one was mentioned more than 10 times: parents or another family member. All public figures who were named only received one or two mentions each.

Sources teens trust the most, by news/media format

of mentions of sources teens trust the most to provide accurate and fair information

Local TV news	170
TikTok	77
Local news (unspecified)	42
YouTube	34
TV news (in general)	33
Internet search	30
Instagram	26
Local newspaper	26
Radio station	17
Online news aggregator	16
Social media (unspecified)	14
X (formerly Twitter)	12
Facebook	10

Notes: Results based on 533 sources mentioned that were categorized as news/media formats. Only formats with 10 or more mentions were included in this chart. "Local news (unspecified)" describes local news sources where the respondent did not specify media format (e.g. print, broadcast, digital, etc.). "TV news (in general)" describes TV news sources where the respondent did not specify whether it was local, national, network, cable or regional. "Social media (unspecified)" describes social media sources where the respondent did not specify which platform (e.g., TikTok, YouTube, Instagram, etc.).

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



Nearly half of teens struggle to pick out the more credible of two sources about the same topic.

In addition to learning about teens' degree of trust in news media and which sources they trust, we also wanted to know if teens could accomplish a fundamental news literacy task: evaluating the credibility of an information source. To find out, we presented them with screenshots (shown below) of two different articles about the same topic and asked them to identify which was more credible. The first article (A), "The Coca-Cola Company Announces Industry-Leading Target for Reusable Packaging," was a press release

published on The Coca-Cola Company website. The second article (B), "Coca-Cola, criticized for plastic pollution, pledges 25% reusable packaging," was a news report published by Reuters, a global news agency.

Only 56% of 13- to 18-year-olds correctly identify the independent, standards-based Reuters news report as the more credible of the two examples. This means almost half of teens (44%) think that The Coca-Cola Company itself is a more reliable and trustworthy source for information about the company's own recycling initiatives than a report from a reputable, independent news organization.

Nearly half of teens say a company's press release is more credible than an independent news report about the same subject

% of teens who say the image on the ___ is more credible (reliable or trustworthy) than the other

✘ Left (A)

44%

A



The Coca-Cola Company Announces Industry-Leading Target for Reusable Packaging

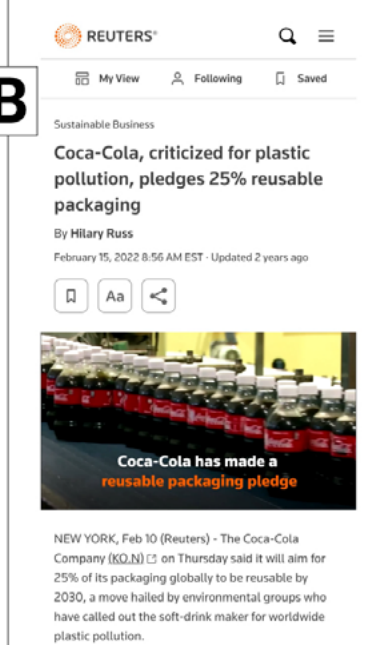
02-11-2022

The Coca-Cola Company today announced an industry-leading goal to significantly boost its use of reusable packaging. By 2030, the company aims to have at least 25% of all beverages sold globally across its portfolio of brands sold in refillable/returnable glass or plastic bottles, or in refillable containers through traditional fountain or Coca-Cola Freestyle dispensers.

✔ Right (B)

56%


B



Coca-Cola, criticized for plastic pollution, pledges 25% reusable packaging

By Hilary Russ

February 15, 2022 8:56 AM EST - Updated 2 years ago



NEW YORK, Feb 10 (Reuters) - The Coca-Cola Company (KO) on Thursday said it will aim for 25% of its packaging globally to be reusable by 2030, a move hailed by environmental groups who have called out the soft-drink maker for worldwide plastic pollution.

Note: Results based on the 1,109 teens who responded to this question.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



Teens who seek out or keep up with news are more likely to correctly identify the independent news report (by Reuters) as more credible than the company press release. Sixty-two percent who actively seek out news and 60% who keep up with news without trying (i.e., “news finds me”) correctly identify the independent news report as more credible, compared with 48% who don’t keep up with news.

Older teens are also more likely to select the correct answer than the youngest teens. Sixty-one percent of 17- to 18-year-olds correctly identify the independent news report as more credible than the company press release, compared with 50% of 13- to 14-year-olds.

There are no significant differences in performance on this task by media literacy exposure or news media trust.



Ability to identify the more credible source, by news habit

% of teens who say the image on the ___ is more credible (reliable or trustworthy) than the other

✘ Left (A) ✔ Right (B)

by NEWS HABIT

Actively seek out news

38%

62%

News finds me

40%

60%

Don't keep up with news

52%

48%

Note: Results based on the 1,109 teens who responded to this question.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



VERIFY, ANALYZE AND EVALUATE

NLP NEWS LITERACY STANDARD 4

Students demonstrate increased critical habits of mind, including effective verification skills and the ability to detect misinformation and faulty evidence.



(Key Findings)

Most teens on social media encounter conspiracy theories and are inclined to believe one or more of them.

Few teens are regular users of generative artificial intelligence technologies, and many are skeptical of the information they produce.

Also in this section:

- » Reverse image search confidence
- » Evaluating evidence
- » Conspiracy theories on social media
- » Belief in NFL conspiracy theory example
- » Distinguishing real from AI-generated image



NLP News Literacy Standard 4:

Verify, analyze and evaluate

Misinformation deteriorates democracy by eroding trust in institutions and shared understandings of fact-based, consensus reality. Countering this requires the public to assess claims about a wide range of subjects, from a diverse range of sources, by effectively evaluating evidence and reasoning — and, when warranted, accepting the consensus view of experts. The ability to recognize common misinformation techniques employed by different actors, for various audiences in distinct contexts, requires verification skills coupled with purposeful critical thinking. We asked teens a series of questions and presented them with two tasks to better understand their attitudes, habits and skills concerning online claims to try to measure their degree of vulnerability and exposure to viral misinformation.

Evaluating evidence

Most teens are confident they can do a reverse image search to find the original source of a photo, but over a third are not.

At the heart of what it means to think critically is the ability to evaluate whether a claim is both logical and supported by strong evidence. While there are many fact-checking tools and techniques to help vet evidence, reverse image searching has become an increasingly important skill as more and more viral misinformation relies on decontextualized, manipulated and fabricated visuals.

When we asked teenagers how confident they are in their ability to search the internet to find the original source of a photo or image, 65% say they are at least somewhat confident while 35% say they are not too confident or not at all confident.

More than a third of teens not confident in their ability to do a reverse image search

% of teens who are ___ that they could search the internet to find the original source of a photo or image

Very confident
 Somewhat confident
 Not too confident
 Not at all confident



Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



There are significant differences in reverse image search confidence by media literacy exposure, news habit and news media trust, but none by age. Teens with at least some media literacy instruction, who keep up with news or who have some trust in news media are all more likely to feel confident in their ability to do a reverse image search.

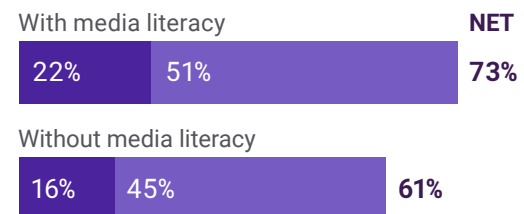
Seventy-three percent of teens with at least some media literacy instruction are confident in their ability to do a reverse image search, compared with 61% of teens without any media literacy instruction. Seventy-seven percent of teens who actively seek out news and 67% of teens who keep up with news without trying (i.e., “news finds me”) are confident in their ability to do a reverse image search, compared with 57% of teens who do not keep up with news. Sixty-eight percent of teens with medium trust in news media are confident in their ability to do a reverse image search, compared with 59% of teens with low trust.

Reverse image search confidence, by media literacy exposure

% of teens who are ___ that they could search the internet to find the original source of a photo or image

Very confident Somewhat confident

by MEDIA LITERACY EXPOSURE



Note: Results for “With media literacy” are based on the 493 teens who said they had any classes with any media literacy instruction during the 2023-24 school year; results for “Without media literacy” are based on the 340 teens who said they did not have that instruction.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

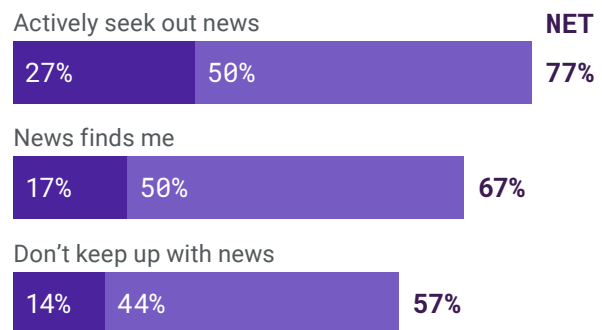


Reverse image search confidence, by news habit and news media trust

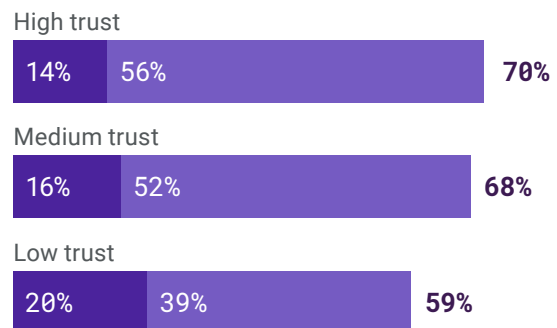
% of teens who are ___ that they could search the internet to find the original source of a photo or image

Very confident Somewhat confident

by NEWS HABIT



by NEWS MEDIA TRUST INDEX



Note: The news media trust index is built on questions about teens' trust or distrust of whether news organizations take journalism standards seriously, their view of whether news organizations try to minimize or add bias to reporting, and their sense of whether news organizations are more or less biased than other content creators. For additional details, see "NLP News Literacy Standard 3."

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



A third of teens mistake an out-of-context image paired with a sensational claim as strong evidence.

As sophisticated as some viral falsehoods can be, simple tricks of context are still a primary tactic for pushing misinformation online. Skepticism about the relationship between an image and a claim made by an ordinary (and often anonymous) person on social media goes a long way toward weeding out many bogus viral claims.

To learn whether teens apply this healthy skepticism when engaging with social media content, we presented them with an image of a social media post and asked them to indicate whether this post provided strong evidence that hot temperatures in Texas melted traffic lights in July 2023. The post was published on X on July 18, 2023, and features an image of a melted traffic light and the text, “It’s so hot 🇺🇸 in Texas even the traffic lights are melting.” The only evidence provided for the claim is the image. There are no links to additional resources or information.

Roughly 1 in 3 teens (34%) incorrectly conclude that the post provides strong evidence for its claim. There are no meaningful differences in performance on this question by media literacy exposure, news habit, news media trust or age.

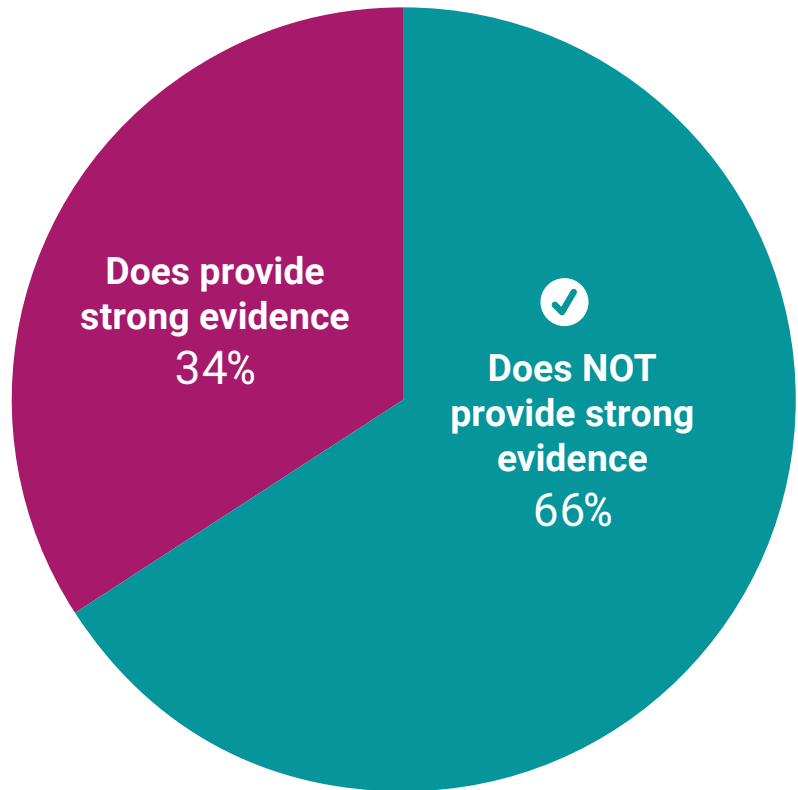


The photo in the post is from the aftermath of a scooter fire in Italy in July 2022. It has nothing to do with extreme weather in Texas. This is an example of false context, a type of misinformation that is easy to create and is often shared widely across social media before being debunked. This post, for instance, was shared over 30,000 times in less than two months (Peterson, 2023).



Roughly 1 in 3 teens say a social media post spreading misinformation provides strong evidence for its claim

% of teens who said this post ___ that hot temperatures in Texas melted traffic lights in July 2023



Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



Conspiratorial thinking

About half of teens on social media say they see posts spreading or promoting conspiracy theories at least once a week.

Conspiracy theories are among the most persistent and dangerous forms of misinformation. We define a conspiracy theory as an unfounded explanation of an event or situation that typically blames the secretive work of sinister, powerful people or organizations such as the government, a company or even one influential person. These explanations are usually proven false because they are based on faulty logic, flawed reasoning and false evidence, and because other explanations supported by strong evidence and expert consensus already exist. Baseless conspiracy

theories gain traction by appealing to cognitive biases and faulty thought patterns, and by serving natural psychological needs such as the need for community, control and understanding. We asked those teens who indicated that they are active on social media how frequently they are exposed to posts that spread or promote conspiracy theories and how many of those theories they are inclined to believe.

Most teens on social media (80%) report seeing posts that spread or promote conspiracy theories while on their preferred platforms, but the frequency of their exposure varies. Twenty percent of teens say they see these posts in their social media feeds daily, 31% see them weekly and 29% see them less than once a week. Only 20% of teens say they never see these kinds of posts while on social media.

8 in 10 teens on social media report seeing conspiracy theory posts, but the frequency of these encounters varies

% of teens on social media who say they see posts that spread or promote conspiracy theories...

■ Daily ■ Weekly ■ Less than once a week ■ Never



Note: Results based on the 1,082 teens who responded to this question.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



There are significant differences in the frequency of conspiracy theory post encounters on social media by media literacy exposure, news habit and news media trust. Teens with at least some media literacy instruction, who keep up with news, and who have high trust in news media are all more likely to report seeing conspiracy theory posts on social media at least once a week. These differences could indicate that teens in these subgroups are more adept at spotting these kinds of posts or that their social media algorithms are more likely to serve them these kinds of posts, or both.

Fifty-seven percent of teens on social media with at least some media literacy instruction report seeing conspiracy theory posts at least once a week, compared with 46% of teens without any media literacy instruction. Sixty-one percent of teens on social media who actively seek out news and 55% who keep up with news without trying (i.e., “news finds me”) report seeing conspiracy theory posts at least once a week, compared with 40% of teens who don’t keep up with news. Sixty-seven percent of teens on social media with high trust in news media report seeing conspiracy theory posts once a week, compared with 49% of teens with medium trust and 49% of teens with low trust.

There are no significant differences in frequency of conspiracy theory post encounters on social media by age.

Aliens existing, the Earth being flat, and the moon landing being a hoax are named by the most teens as conspiracy theories they have seen recently on their social media feeds.

To better understand which conspiracy theories are circulating among 13- to 18-year-olds and what they consider to be a conspiracy theory, we asked teens who reported seeing them on social media to provide an example of one they recalled encountering recently. Results are based on the 853 teens who responded to this prompt. After splitting responses with multiple examples and removing invalid responses, such as “N/A,” or “I don’t know,” and responses without enough detail to categorize accurately, our final dataset included 561 examples with enough detail to categorize by both narrative and topic (e.g., “COVID was a scam”) and an additional 217 examples that only offered enough detail to categorize by topic (e.g., “Covid 19”).

While some narratives did not fit the traditional definition of a conspiracy theory, we included those in the final dataset to see if there were any trends among teens mistaking theories backed by robust evidence or scientific consensus as conspiracy theories. The only narrative with a significant factual basis that received more than five mentions was about a potential TikTok ban. Nine teens incorrectly cited this narrative as a conspiracy theory, with a TikTok ban still being litigated in U.S. courts at the time of the data collection and writing of this report. Other narratives that did not quite reach the traditional definition of conspiracy theory included opinion statements, such as, “Video games are bad for kids,” but these opinion-based narratives never had more than three mentions.

Respondents named a total of 217 unique conspiracy theory narratives they had recently seen being spread or promoted on social media. Of the 217 narratives, 11 were mentioned 10 or more times. The top five most-mentioned conspiracy theories are that aliens exist or are among us, the Earth is flat, the moon landing was a hoax, the world is ending, and the 2020 election was rigged or stolen.



Conspiracy theory examples, by narrative

of mentions of conspiracy theories teens have recently seen being spread or promoted on social media

Aliens exist/are among us	59
Earth is flat	44
Moon landing was a hoax	18
The world is ending	16
2020 election was rigged/stolen	16
Government controls us/information	13
Illuminati exist	13
Government is killing/experimenting on us	12
Politicians/government officials are aliens or lizard people	11
COVID-19 vaccines are dangerous	10
Climate change doesn't exist or is not a threat	10

Note: Results based on 561 conspiracy theory examples with enough detail to determine a narrative. Only narratives with 10 or more mentions were included in this chart.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



We categorized all 778 conspiracy theory examples, including the 561 with enough detail to determine a narrative, into 35 unique topics. Of those 35 topics, 21 were mentioned 10 or more times. The top five most popular topics of conspiracy theory topics are aliens and UFOs, COVID-19 and other public health issues, Donald Trump, celebrity rumors, and international subjects, which includes conspiracy theory examples about the Israel-Hamas war and the war between Russia and Ukraine. The topic counts also showed the impact of the contentious 2024 presidential election: Both former President Donald Trump and President Joe Biden (presumptive candidates at the time of the survey) were frequently cited topics of conspiracy theories teens encountered on social media.

Conspiracy theory examples, by topic

of mentions of conspiracy theories teens have recently seen being spread or promoted on social media

Aliens & UFOs	89
COVID-19 & Public Health Issues	59
Celebrity Rumors	58
Donald Trump	56
International Subjects	47
Government Power/Control	45
Flat Earth	44
Fake/Staged Event or False Flags	38
Joe Biden	32
Technology	29
Fake or Suspicious Deaths	29
Election Fraud	28
Secret Societies & Elites	23
Astronomy & Physics	20
Climate Change & Environment	20
Apocalypse	18
Supernatural & Mythological Creatures	17
Historical Events	16
Life Sciences	11
Private Companies	11
Impending Unrest/War	10

Note: Results based on 778 conspiracy theory examples with enough detail to determine topic. Only topics with 10 or more mentions were included in this chart.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



A majority of teens are inclined to believe one or more conspiracy theories they see on their social media feeds.

While encountering a conspiracy theory is not the same thing as believing in one, both the frequency of teens' exposure to conspiracy theories and the number of conspiratorial narratives cited is concerning. To learn more about how inclined teens are to believe in the conspiracy theories they encounter online, we asked those who reported seeing posts that spread or promoted conspiracy theories whether they thought any of them might be true. Roughly 8 in 10 teens (81%) say they are inclined to believe at least one of the

conspiracy theories they encountered online. When looking at the quantity of conspiracy theories they are inclined to believe, 30% say they thought at least some were true, 51% say they thought very few were true and only 19% say they thought none were true.

Although there are no significant differences in the quantity of conspiracy theories teens are inclined to believe by media literacy exposure, news habit or age, there is one notable difference by news media trust: Teens with low trust in news media are more likely to say that at least some of the conspiracy theories they encountered are likely to be true than teens with medium trust in news media (37% vs. 26%).

Roughly 8 in 10 teens inclined to believe one or more conspiracy theories they see on their social media feeds

How many, if any, of the conspiracy theories you see being spread or promoted online do you think are likely to be true?

A lot
 Some
 Very few
 None



Note: Results based on the 862 teens who responded to this question.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



Nearly half of teens are inclined to believe conspiracy theory that NFL playoffs are rigged

% of teens who think the theory that the Super Bowl and other National Football League (NFL) playoff games are rigged is...

Definitely true
 Probably true
 Probably NOT true
 Definitely NOT true



Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

Nearly half of teens express belief in the conspiracy theory that the NFL playoffs and Super Bowl are rigged.

We also directly asked teens about their beliefs concerning a conspiracy theory that was popular in late 2023 and early 2024: that the Super Bowl and other National Football League (NFL) playoff games are rigged. Teens are split on their level of belief in this specific conspiracy theory, with roughly half (48%) thinking it is more likely to be true and the other half (52%) thinking it is more likely to be false.



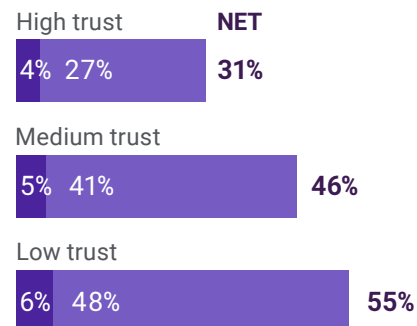
Although there are no significant differences in belief in the football conspiracy theory example by media literacy exposure, news habit or age, there is one notable difference by news media trust: Teens with low trust in news media are more likely to say that the football conspiracy theory example was probably or definitely true than teens with medium or high trust (55% vs. 46% and 31%, respectively).

Belief in football conspiracy theory example, by news media trust

% of teens who think the theory that the Super Bowl and other National Football League (NFL) playoff games are rigged is...

Definitely true
 Probably true

by NEWS MEDIA TRUST INDEX



Note: The news media trust index is built on questions about teens' trust or distrust of whether news organizations take journalism standards seriously, their view of whether news organizations try to minimize or add bias to reporting, and their sense of whether news organizations are more or less biased than other content creators. For additional details, see "NLP News Literacy Standard 3."

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



Artificial intelligence

Most teens don't regularly use generative AI technologies.

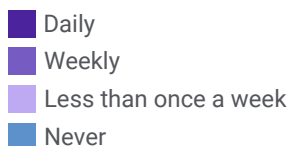
Generative artificial intelligence (generative AI) tools have introduced sudden and dramatic changes to the information landscape and threaten to substantially increase the amount of convincing misinformation. Chatbots and image generators have made it easy for trolls and propagandists to populate bogus websites (often masquerading as legitimate news sources) and crank out an endless stream of text-based claims and provocative imagery for social media. Even when individuals seek to use these tools in good faith, they can do harm. AI image generators

are prone to amplifying stereotypes, and chatbots sometimes make up or “hallucinate” details and sources in response to prompts. We asked teens about their use of and trust in generative AI tools and then put their AI image detection skills to the test.

When asked about their use of generative AI chatbots and image generators, most teens say they are not yet regular users of these tools. Only 23% of teens report using generative AI chatbots, such as ChatGPT, Gemini or Copilot, once a week or more. Even fewer teens (9%) report using AI image generators, such as DALL-E, Midjourney, DreamStudio or Gemini, once a week or more. In fact, almost half of teens (45%) say they never use generative AI chatbots and the majority of teens (68%) say they never use AI image generators.

55% of teens use generative AI chatbots, but only 5% report being daily users

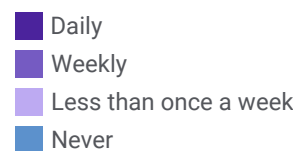
% of teens who say they use generative artificial intelligence (AI) chatbots, such as ChatGPT, Gemini or Copilot...



Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

33% of teens use AI image generators, but only 2% report being daily users

% of teens who say they use artificial intelligence (AI) image generators, such as DALL-E, Midjourney, DreamStudio or Gemini...



Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



There are significant differences in AI technology usage by news habit and age, but not by media literacy exposure or news media trust.

Teens who keep up with news are more likely to report using AI technologies at least once a week. Regarding AI chatbot usage, 30% of teens who actively seek out news and 25% of teens who keep up with the news without trying (i.e., “news finds me”) say they use an AI chatbot at least once a week, compared with 17% of teens who don’t keep up with news.

Regarding AI image generator usage, 17% of teens who actively seek out news say they use an AI image generator at least once a week, compared with 8% of teens who keep up with news without trying (i.e., “news finds me”) and 7% of teens who don’t keep up with news.

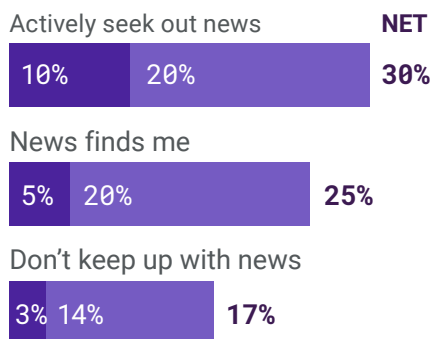
Older teens are twice as likely to be regular users of AI image generators than younger teens. Ten percent of 17- and 18-year-olds and 12% of 15- and 16-year-olds report using an AI image generator at least once a week, compared with just 5% of 13- and 14-year-olds.

Generative AI chatbot usage, by news habit

% of teens who say they have used generative AI chatbots...

■ Daily ■ Weekly

by NEWS HABIT



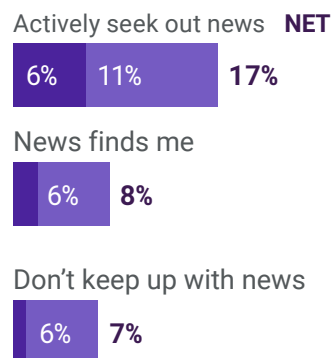
Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

AI image generator usage, by news habit

% of teens who say they have used AI image generators...

■ Daily ■ Weekly

by NEWS HABIT



Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



More teens are skeptical than trusting when it comes to the accuracy of information from AI chatbots.

When asked how much they trust generative AI chatbots to produce information that is accurate and fair, half of teens say they have little or no trust, 36% say they have a great deal or a fair amount of trust, and 14% had never thought about this question.

There are significant differences in how much teens trust generative AI chatbots to produce reliably factual information by both news habit and news media trust. Teens who actively seek out news and have at least some trust in news media are more likely to trust

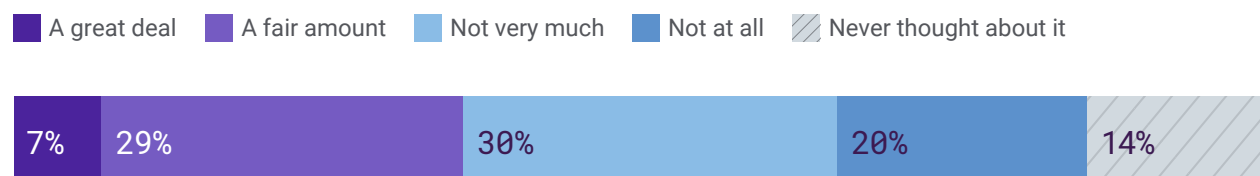
AI chatbots at least a fair amount when it comes to producing information that is accurate and fair.

Forty-five percent of teens who actively seek out news say they trust AI chatbots to produce reliably factual information at least a fair amount, compared with 29% of teens who don't keep up with news. Forty-three percent of teens with high trust in news media and 42% with medium trust in news media say they trust AI chatbots to produce reliably factual information at least a fair amount, compared with 24% of teens with low trust in news media.

There are no meaningful differences in degree of trust by media literacy exposure or age.

Half of teens are skeptical of generative AI chatbots when it comes to producing accurate and fair information

How much, if at all, do you trust generative AI chatbots to produce information that is accurate and fair?



Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



Most teens able to distinguish real photo from AI-generated image

% of teens who say the image on the ___ is of a real person

✔ Left (A)

69%

✘ Right (B)

31%



Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

The majority of teens can identify a real photo versus an AI-generated image when presented with two similar images.

To measure whether teens can reliably distinguish between an AI-generated image and an authentic photo, we presented them with two images of a teenager listening to headphones with a cityscape in the background. We asked participants to select the image of a real person. Despite low reported usage of generative AI tools, the majority of 13- to 18-year-olds (69%) are able to correctly identify image A as an authentic photo of a real person.



Ability to distinguish real from AI-generated image, by media literacy exposure

% of teens who say the image on the ___ is of a real person

✓ Left (A) ✗ Right (B)

by MEDIA LITERACY EXPOSURE

With media literacy



Without media literacy



Note: Results for “With media literacy” are based on the 493 teens who said they had any classes with any media literacy instruction during the 2023-24 school year; results for “Without media literacy” are based on the 340 teens who said they did not have that instruction.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

Teens with at least some media literacy instruction are more likely to correctly identify which image featured a real person than teens without any media literacy instruction (76% vs. 65%). Teens with medium trust in news media are also more likely to be successful at this task than teens with low trust in news media (72% vs. 63%).

There are no significant differences in performance on this task by news habit or age.





CITIZENSHIP

NLP NEWS LITERACY STANDARD **5**

Students express and exercise civic responsibility by seeking, sharing and producing credible information as effective participants in a democracy.



(Key Finding)

While few teens tend to seek out news, those who do are more likely to also have other healthy news habits.

Also in this section:

- » News avoidance
- » News consumption
- » News-related social media habits
- » Civic-minded activity engagement



NLP News Literacy Standard 5: Citizenship

Building and sustaining healthy democratic communities requires individuals to seek, share and create credible information; to hold news media accountable for coverage that arguably falls short of journalistic ideals; and to actively combat the effects of misinformation on public discourse. We asked a series of questions to learn about teen news and information habits.

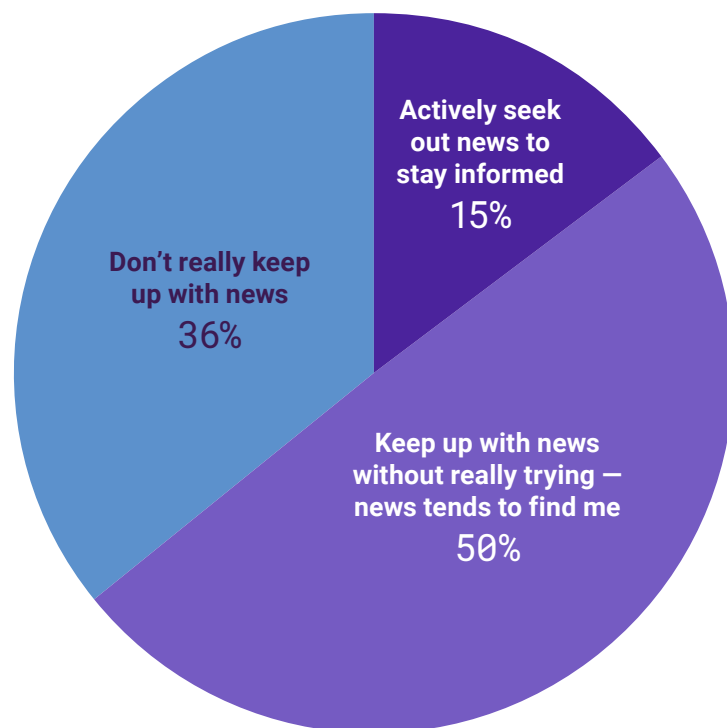
Seeking credible information

Most teens say they do keep up with news, but few actively seek it out.

When asked about their general news habits, half of teens (50%) report keeping up with news without trying (also described as “news finds me”), while only 15% report actively seeking out news to stay informed. The remaining 36% say that they don’t really keep up with news.

Only 15% of teens say they actively seek out news to stay informed

% of teens who say they...



Note: Items may not sum exactly to 100% due to rounding.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



In addition to media literacy exposure, news media trust and age, we also analyzed this data by gender and race/ethnicity to learn more about any demographic differences between each news habit group. There are significant differences in news media trust, gender and race/ethnicity, but none by media literacy exposure or age.

Teens with higher trust in news media are more likely to identify as active news seekers. Twenty-five percent of teens with high trust in news media and 18% with medium trust say they actively seek out news, compared with just 7% of teens with low trust in news media.

There are also a few significant demographic differences in news habit. Boys and young men are more likely to say they don't keep up with news. Forty-three percent of boys and young men say they don't keep up with news, compared with 30% of girls and young women. White teens are also more likely to say they don't keep up with news. Forty-one percent of white teens say they don't keep up with news, compared with 31% of Hispanic teens and 26% of Black teens.

News habit, by news media trust

% of teens who say they...

- Actively seek out news
- News finds me
- Don't keep up with news

by NEWS MEDIA TRUST INDEX

High trust



Medium trust



Low trust



Notes: Items may not sum exactly to 100% due to rounding. The news media trust index is built on questions about teens' trust or distrust of whether news organizations take journalism standards seriously, their view of whether news organizations try to minimize or add bias to reporting, and their sense of whether news organizations are more or less biased than other content creators. For additional details, see "NLP News Literacy Standard 3."

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



News habit, by age, gender and race/ethnicity

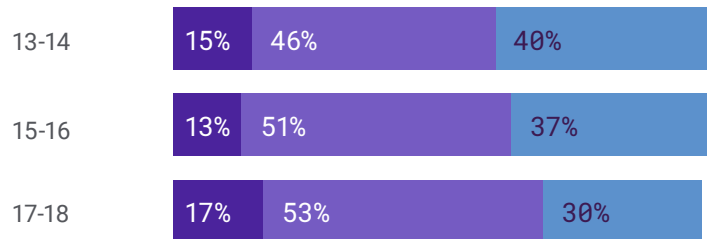
% of teens who said they...

- Actively seek out news
- News finds me
- Don't keep up with news

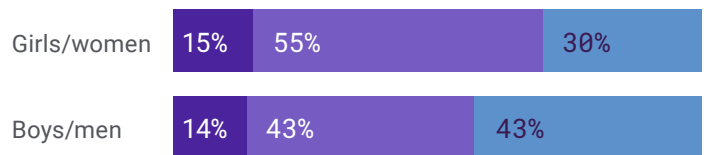
Note: Items may not sum exactly to 100% due to rounding.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

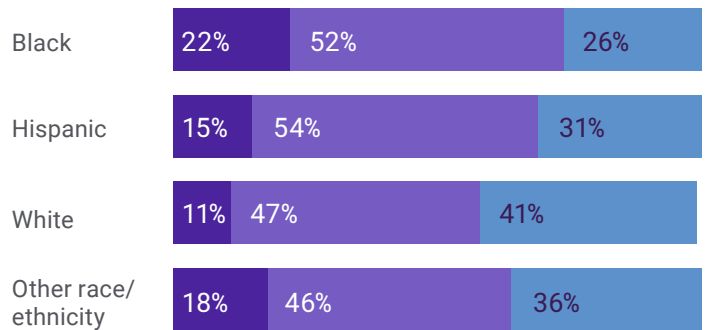
by AGE



by GENDER



by RACE/ETHNICITY





Just over half of teens actively avoid news at least sometimes; however, few report often avoiding it.

Because anyone might periodically engage in news avoidant behavior regardless of their regular news habits, we also asked teens about how often, if ever, they actively avoid news. Roughly half of teens (51%) say they often or sometimes avoid news while the other half (49%) say they rarely or never do. Just 17% of teens report never actively avoiding news.

There are several significant differences in news avoidance by news habit. Teens who keep up with news are more likely to report rarely avoiding news, whereas teens who don't keep up with news are more likely to report either often or never avoiding news. The latter finding may suggest that teens who don't keep up with news are, in some cases, actively avoiding it and, in other cases, just not encountering it.

Forty-seven percent of teens who actively seek out news and 34% of teens who keep up with news without trying (i.e., "news finds me") say they rarely avoid news, compared with 22% of teens who don't keep up with news. Seventeen percent of teens who don't keep up with news say they often avoid news, compared with 6% of teens who keep up with news without trying (i.e., "news finds me") and 3% of teens who actively seek out news. Twenty-three percent of teens who don't keep up with news say they never avoid news, compared with 14% of teens who keep up with news without trying (i.e., "news finds me").

There is one notable difference in news avoidance by news media trust. Teens with low trust are more likely to often avoid news than teens with medium or high trust (15% vs. 8% and 2%, respectively).

There are no meaningful differences in news avoidance by either media literacy exposure or age.

Over 8 in 10 teens actively avoid news at times, but only 10% do so often

How often, if ever, do you actively avoid news?

Often
 Sometimes
 Rarely
 Never



Note: Items may not sum exactly to 100% due to rounding.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

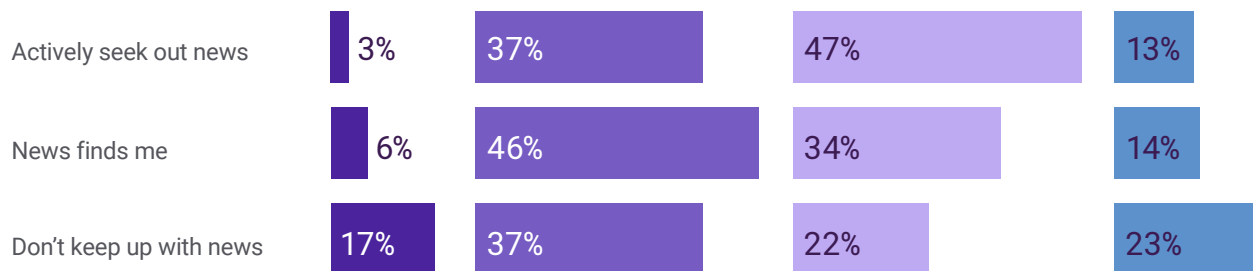


News avoidance, by news habit

% of teens who say they actively avoid news...

Often
 Sometimes
 Rarely
 Never

by NEWS HABIT



Note: Items may not sum exactly to 100% due to rounding.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



Less than half of teens get news at least once a week.

Because the term “news” can be interpreted in different ways, we asked teens specifically about how often they read, watch or listen to “news produced by professional journalists and the organizations they work for.” Forty-one percent of teens say they get news at least once a week, but more teens report never getting news (15%) than getting news daily (12%).

About 4 in 10 teens get news at least once a week, including 12% who report getting news daily

% of teens who say they read, watch or listen to news produced by professional journalists and the organizations they work for...

■ Daily ■ Weekly ■ Less than once a week ■ Never



Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



There are significant differences in frequency of news consumption by media literacy exposure, news habit, news media trust and age.

Teens with at least some media literacy instruction are more likely to say they get news daily or weekly than teens without any media literacy instruction (49% vs. 36%).

Teens who actively seek out news and have higher trust in news media are also more likely to report frequently reading, watching or listening to news produced by news organizations. Eighty percent of teens who actively seek out news say they get news daily or weekly, compared with 51% of teens who keep up with news without trying (i.e., “news finds me”) and 10% of teens who don’t really keep up with news. Fifty-four percent of teens with high trust in news media and 46% of teens with medium trust report getting news daily or weekly, compared with 29% of teens with low trust.

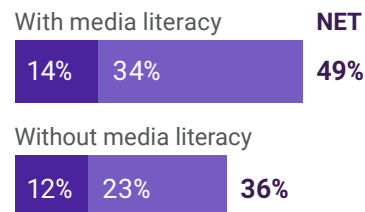
There was one notable significant difference by age: Younger teens are slightly more likely to say they never get news produced by news organizations. Twenty-one percent of 13- and 14-year-olds and 17% of 15- and 16-year-olds say they never get news, compared with 8% of 17- and 18-year-olds.

News consumption, by media literacy exposure

% of teens who say they read, watch or listen to news produced by professional journalists and the organizations they work for...

■ Daily ■ Weekly

by MEDIA LITERACY EXPOSURE



Note: Results for “With media literacy” are based on the 493 teens who said they had any classes with any media literacy instruction during the 2023-24 school year; results for “Without media literacy” are based on the 340 teens who said they did not have that instruction.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

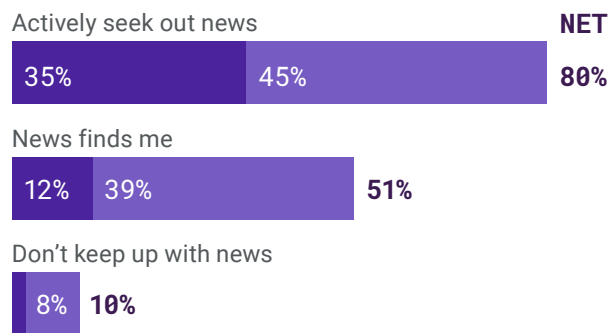


News consumption, by news habit and news media trust

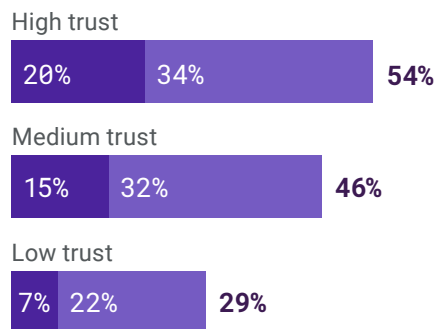
% of teens who say they read, watch or listen to news produced by professional journalists and the organizations they work for...

■ Daily ■ Weekly

by NEWS HABIT



by NEWS MEDIA TRUST INDEX



Note: The news media trust index is built on questions about teens' trust or distrust of whether news organizations take journalism standards seriously, their view of whether news organizations try to minimize or add bias to reporting, and their sense of whether news organizations are more or less biased than other content creators. For additional details, see "NLP News Literacy Standard 3."

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



Teens get news on social media more than any other source.

An overwhelming majority of teen news consumers (83%) say they get news on social media such as YouTube, TikTok or Instagram, followed by 45% who say TV. Teens are more than five times as likely to report getting news from news websites and apps (31%) than from print newspapers (6%). When it came to audio news options, teens are roughly equally likely to say they get news from radio (21%) as they are from podcasts (18%).

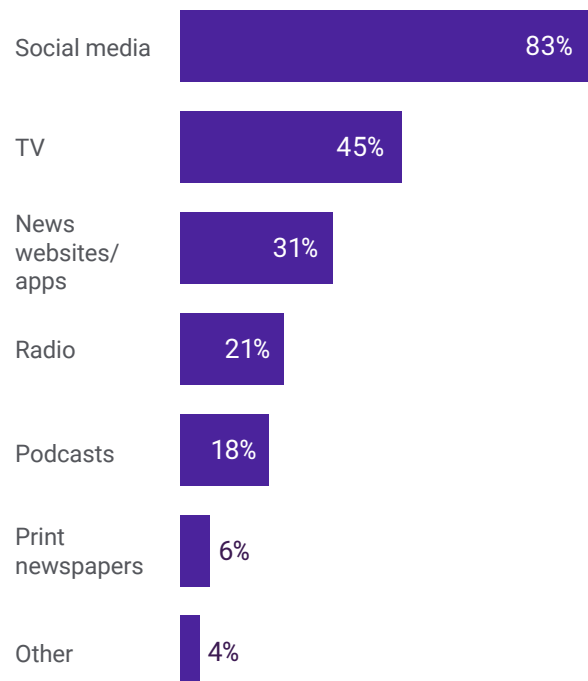
Of the 4% of teens who selected “Other” and left a comment to specify where they get news produced by news organizations, most mention getting it from current events brought up in school, secondhand from friends and family, or from Google.

There are significant differences in sources for news by media literacy exposure, news habit and news media trust, but not by age.

Teens with at least some media literacy instruction are more likely to get news from news websites and apps, radio and TV. Thirty-six percent of teens with at least some media literacy instruction get news from news websites and apps, compared with 24% without any media literacy instruction. Twenty-eight percent of teens with at least some media literacy instruction get news from radio, compared with 16% without any media literacy instruction. Half of teens with at least some media literacy instruction get news from TV, compared with 40% without any media literacy instruction.

Among teen news consumers, social media is a dominant source for news

Where do you typically get news produced by professional journalists and the organizations they work for? Please select all that apply.



Notes: Results based on the 947 teens who responded to this question. Results do not sum to 100% because multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



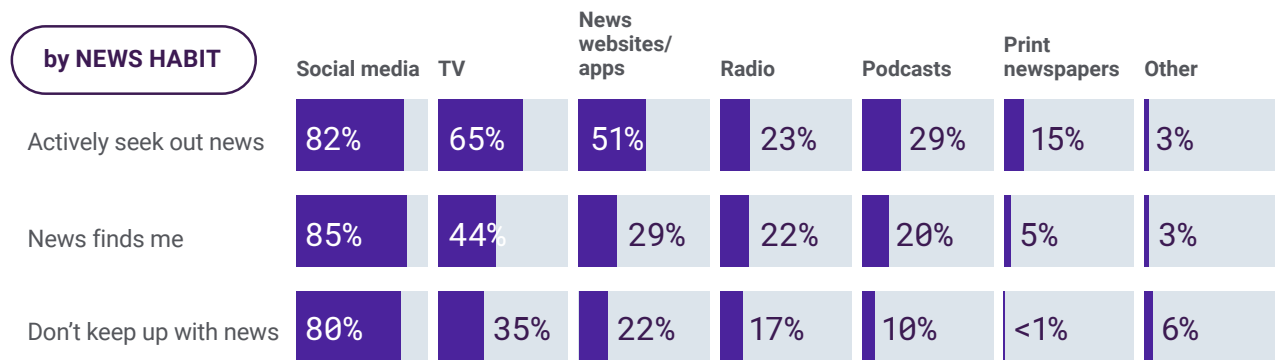
Teens who actively keep up with news are more likely to get news from TV, news websites/apps, print newspapers and podcasts. Sixty-five percent of teens who actively seek out news get it from TV, compared with 44% of teens who keep up with news without trying (i.e., “news finds me”) and 35% of teens who don’t keep up with news. Fifty-one percent of teens who actively seek out news get it from news websites/apps, compared with 29% of teens who keep up with news without trying (i.e., “news finds me”) and 22% of teens who don’t keep up with news. Fifteen percent of teens who actively seek out news get it from print newspapers, compared with 5% of teens who keep up with news without trying (i.e., “news finds me”) and less than 1% of teens who don’t keep up with news. Twenty-

nine percent of teens who actively keep up with news and 20% of teens who keep up with news without trying (i.e., “news finds me”) get it from podcasts, compared with 10% of teens who don’t keep up with news.

Teens with high trust in news media are more likely to get news from TV and print newspapers. Fifty-nine percent of teens with high trust in news media and 48% of teens with medium trust in news media get news from TV, compared with 35% of teens with low trust in news media. Seventeen percent of teens with high trust in news media get news from print newspapers, compared with 4% of teens with medium trust and 5% of teens with low trust.

News sources, by news habit

Where do you typically get news produced by professional journalists and the organizations they work for? Please select all that apply.



Notes: Results based on the 947 teens who responded to this question. Results do not sum to 100% because multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



Nearly 6 in 10 teens regularly use or access three or more social media platforms

% of teens who use regularly access or use ___ social media platforms, such as YouTube, TikTok or Instagram

■ Three or more ■ Two ■ One ■ Zero



Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

Almost all teens use at least one social media platform and over half use three or more.

Because social media is so popular among teens, we also wanted to know whether they follow any journalists or news organizations on social media. To do so, we first needed to know more about their social media usage. Most teens (97%) say they regularly use one or more social media platforms, including more than half (57%) who report regularly using three or more platforms.

There are some significant differences in the quantity of social media platforms teens regularly use by age. Seventeen- and 18-year-olds are more likely to report regularly using three or more social media platforms than 13- and 14-year-olds (62% vs. 49%). And 13- and 14-year-olds are more likely to report regularly using just one social media platform than both 15- and 16-year-olds and 17- and 18-year-olds (20% vs. 13% and 8%, respectively).

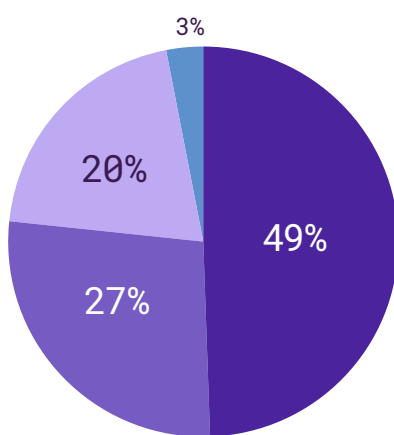
There are no meaningful differences in the quantity of social media platforms teens regularly use by media literacy exposure, news habit or news media trust.



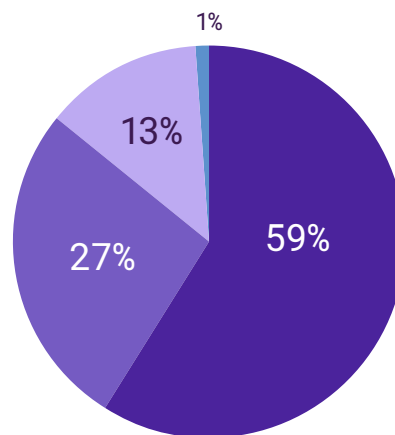
Social media platform use, by age

% of teens who use regularly access or use ___ social media platforms, such as YouTube, TikTok or Instagram

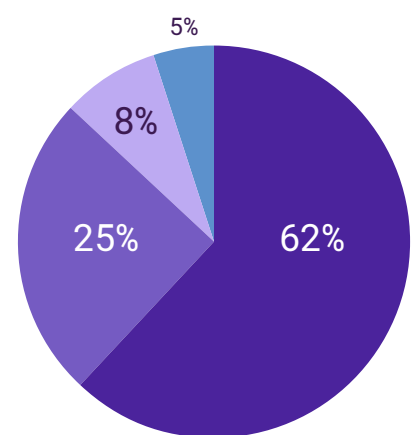
■ Three or more ■ Two ■ One ■ Zero



Ages 13-14



Ages 15-16



Ages 17-18

Note: Items may not sum exactly to 100% due to rounding.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



Many teens on social media do not follow any journalists or news organizations.

The practice of following journalists or news organizations is not typical among teen social media users. Of the 1,082 teen social media users surveyed, 45% responded that they do not follow any professional journalists or news organizations and 33% said they follow very few. Only 22% said they follow at least some.

There are significant differences in how many news organizations teens say they follow on social media by both news habit and news media trust, but not by media literacy exposure or age.

Teens on social media who keep up with news and have higher news media trust are more likely to follow at least some news organizations. Roughly half (46%) of teen social media users who actively seek out news say they follow at least some journalists and news organizations, compared with a quarter (25%) of teens who keep up with news without trying (i.e., “news finds me”) and just 7% of teens who don’t keep up with news. Thirty-four percent of teens on social media with high trust in news media and 26% with medium trust say they follow at least some news organizations, compared with 13% of teens with low trust.

Almost half of teens on social media do not follow any news organizations

How many professional journalists and the organizations they work for, if any, do you follow on social media?

A lot
 Some
 Very few
 None



Note: Results based on the 1,082 teens who responded to this question.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



News organization social media follows, by news habit and news media trust

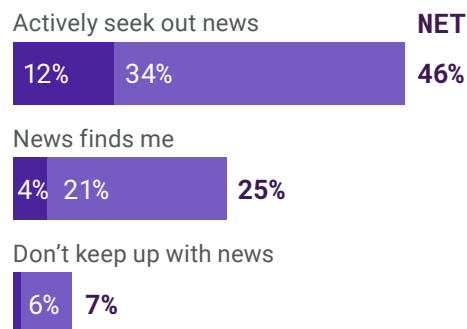
Notes: Results based on the 1,082 teens who responded to this question. The news media trust index is built on questions about teens' trust or distrust of whether news organizations take journalism standards seriously, their view of whether news organizations try to minimize or add bias to reporting, and their sense of whether news organizations are more or less biased than other content creators. For additional details, see "NLP News Literacy Standard 3."

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

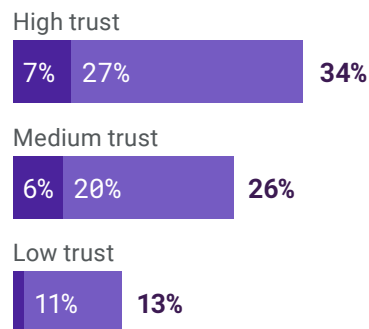
How many professional journalists and the organizations they work for, if any, do you follow on social media?

■ A lot ■ Some

by NEWS HABIT



by NEWS MEDIA TRUST INDEX





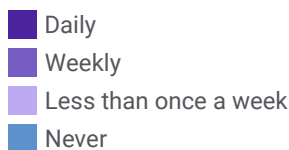
Sharing credible information

Many teens on social media do not like or share posts about issues or events in the news.

Most teens on social media do not regularly like or share posts about issues and events in the news. Over three-quarters of teens (77%) say they either never like or share these kinds of posts or do so less than once a week. Only 5% of teens report liking or sharing news-related posts daily and 18% report doing so weekly.

Roughly 4 in 10 teens on social media never like or share posts about issues or events in the news

% of teens who like or share social media posts about issues or events in the news...



Note: Results based on the 1,081 teens who responded to this question.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

Teens on social media who actively seek out news and have higher trust in news media are especially likely to more frequently like or share posts about issues or events in the news. Fifty-one percent of teens on social media who actively seek out news say they like or share posts about news at least weekly, compared with 27% of teens who keep up with news without trying (i.e., “news finds me”) and 6% of teens who don’t keep up with news. Thirty percent of teens on social media with high trust in news media and 26% with medium trust say they like or share posts about news at least weekly, compared with 17% of teens with low trust.

The oldest teens are also more likely to regularly like or share news-related posts. Thirty-one percent of 17- and 18-year-olds say they like or share news-related posts at least weekly, compared with 16% of 13- and 14-year-olds.

There are no meaningful differences in frequency of liking or sharing news-related posts by media literacy exposure.

Frequency of liking/ sharing social media posts about news, by news habit and news media trust

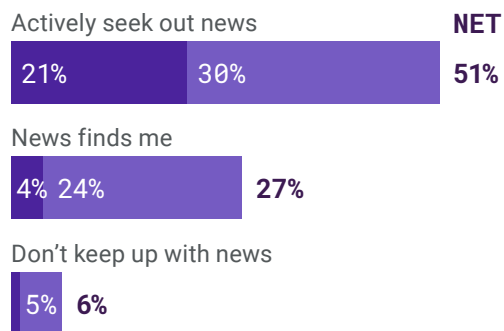
Notes: Results based on the 1,081 teens who responded to this question. The news media trust index is built on questions about teens' trust or distrust of whether news organizations take journalism standards seriously, their view of whether news organizations try to minimize or add bias to reporting, and their sense of whether news organizations are more or less biased than other content creators. For additional details, see "NLP News Literacy Standard 3."

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

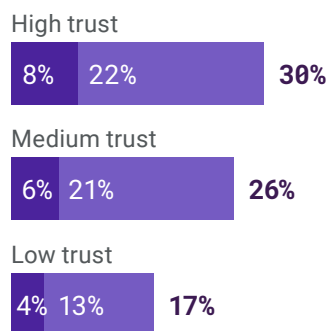
% of teens who like or share social media posts about issues or events in the news...

■ Daily ■ Weekly

by NEWS HABIT



by NEWS MEDIA TRUST INDEX





Among teens who do consider liking and sharing posts about issues and events in the news, many say they fact-check before doing so at least sometimes.

When considering whether to like or share a social media post about an issue or event in the news, most teens (77%) report fact-checking the post

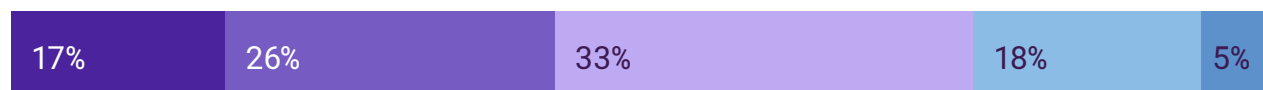
first, at least sometimes. In fact, 17% of teens say they always fact-check a news-related post when thinking about whether to like or share it.

There are significant differences in frequency of fact-checking before liking or sharing news-related social media posts by media literacy exposure and news habit, but not by news media trust or age.

Nearly 8 in 10 teens say that, when considering whether to like or share a social media post about news, they check to see if it's true first, at least sometimes

When you are considering whether to like or share a social media post about an issue or event in the news, how often do you check to see if it's true first?

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never



Notes: Results based on the 674 teens who responded to this question. Items may not sum exactly to 100% due to rounding.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



Teens who had at least one class with any media literacy instruction during the 2023-24 school year are especially likely to report more frequently fact-checking before liking or sharing a news-related social media post. Fifty-one percent of teens with at least some media literacy instruction say they check to see if a social media post about news is true first, either always or often, before deciding whether to like or share it, compared with just 37% of teens without any media literacy.

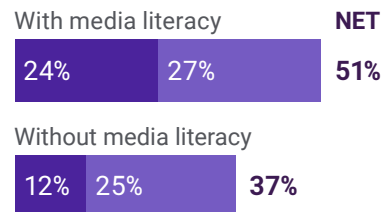
Teens who actively seek out news are more than twice as likely to say they “always” fact-check before liking and sharing a news-related social media post than teens who keep up with news without trying (i.e., “news finds me”) or teens who don’t keep up with news (30% vs. 14% and 13%, respectively).

Frequency of fact-checking social media posts before liking/sharing, by media literacy exposure

When you are considering whether to like or share a social media post about an issue or event in the news, how often do you check to see if it’s true first?

■ Always ■ Often

by MEDIA LITERACY EXPOSURE



Note: Results for “With media literacy” are based on the 315 teens who said they had any classes with any media literacy instruction during the 2023-24 school year; results for “Without media literacy” are based on the 211 teens who said they did not have that instruction.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



Among teens who ever fact-check news-related social media posts, doing a quick internet search to investigate the post's source or claims is a go-to verification technique.

Among teens who report sometimes fact-checking news-related social media posts, the most common verification technique is to simply search the internet to investigate the post's source or claims, also known as "lateral reading" (a term coined by the Stanford History Education Group, now known as the Digital Inquiry Group). The next most common technique is scanning the post's comments to see if anyone raised credibility concerns.

Of the 3% of teens who selected "other" and left a comment specifying how they fact-check news-related social media posts, most name techniques that are akin to lateral reading, such as consulting fact-checking websites like Snopes or trusted news outlets. Open-ended responses that did not fit into the listed verification techniques involve checking with a parent to see if a social media post is true.

Teens who say they had at least one class with any media literacy instruction are especially likely to report using particular verification techniques. Fifty-seven percent of teens with at least some media literacy instruction say they check to see if the account behind

Among teens who ever fact-check social media posts before liking or sharing, lateral reading is a go-to verification technique

Notes: Results based on the 632 teens who responded to this question. Results do not sum to 100% because multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

When you check to see if a social media post is true, which of the following do you do? Please select all that apply.

Do a quick internet search to investigate the post's source or claims.

74%

Scan the post's comments to see if anyone raised credibility concerns.

50%

Check to see if the account is authentic, such as looking for a blue check mark or other verification badge next to the username.

45%

Check out other posts from the same user to investigate their reputation.

40%

Other

3%



the post is authentic, compared with 35% of teens without any media literacy instruction. Forty-seven percent of teens with at least some media literacy instruction say they check out other posts from the same user, compared with 30% of teens without any media literacy instruction. Fifty-seven percent of teens with at least some media literacy instruction say they scan the post’s comments, compared with 43% of teens without any media literacy instruction.

There is one notable difference in verification techniques used by age. Forty-four percent of 17- and 18-year-olds and 43% of 15- and 16-year-olds say they check out other posts from the same user, compared with 30% of 13- and 14-year-olds.

There are no meaningful differences in verification techniques used by news habit or news media trust.

Verification techniques used among teens who fact-check social media posts, by media literacy exposure

- With media literacy
- Without media literacy

Notes: Results do not sum to 100% because multiple responses were allowed. Results for “With media literacy” are based on the 296 teens who said they had any classes with any media literacy instruction during the 2023-24 school year; results for “Without media literacy” are based on the 197 teens who said they did not have that instruction.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

When you check to see if a social media post is true, which of the following do you do? Please select all that apply.

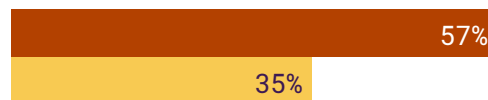
Do a quick internet search to investigate the post’s source or claims.



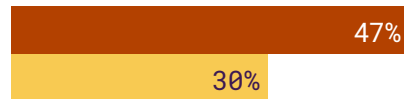
Scan the post’s comments to see if anyone raised credibility concerns.



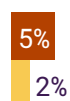
Check to see if the account is authentic, such as looking for a blue check mark or other verification badge next to the username.



Check out other posts from the same user to investigate their reputation.



Other





Producing credible information

Few teens on social media regularly post content of their own about issues or events in the news.

Teens create their own social media content about issues and events in the news much less often than they like or share news-related content created by others. In fact, only about 1 in 10 teens (11%) report posting their own news-related content at least once a week. Most teens on social media (63%) say they never create content about issues or events in the news.

There are significant differences in the frequency of posting news-related social media content by news habit, news media trust and age, but not by media literacy exposure.

Teens who actively seek out news and teens with higher trust in news media are more likely to regularly post their own social media content about issues or events in the news. Twenty-seven percent of teens who actively keep up with news post their own news-related content at least once a week, compared with 10% of teens who keep up with news without trying (i.e., “news finds me”) and 5% of teens who don’t keep up with news. Seventeen percent of teens with high trust in news media and 13% of teens with medium trust in news media post their own news-related content at least once a week, compared with 6% of teens with low trust in news media.

Older teens are also more likely to regularly post their own social media content about issues or events in the news. Seventeen- and 18-year-olds are more likely to post their own news-related content at least once a week, compared with 13- and 14-year-olds (15% vs. 8%).

Nearly two-thirds of teens on social media never post content of their own about issues or events in the news

% of teens who post their own social media content about issues or events in the news...

■ Daily ■ Weekly ■ Less than once a week ■ Never



Note: Results based on the 1,081 teens who responded to this question.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



Frequency of posting social media content about news, by news habit and news media trust

Notes: Results based on the 1,081 teens who responded to this question. The news media trust index is built on questions about teens' trust or distrust of whether news organizations take journalism standards seriously, their view of whether news organizations try to minimize or add bias to reporting, and their sense of whether news organizations are more or less biased than other content creators. For additional details, see "NLP News Literacy Standard 3."

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

% of teens who post their own social media content about issues or events in the news...

■ Daily ■ Weekly

by NEWS HABIT

Actively seek out news **NET**



News finds me



Don't keep up with news



by NEWS MEDIA TRUST INDEX

High trust



Medium trust



Low trust





Majority of teens say that, when posting their own social media content about news, they check to see if it's true first, at least sometimes

When posting your own content about issues or events in the news, how often do you take steps to make sure you are getting the facts right?

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never



Note: Results based on the 431 teens who responded to this question.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

Among teens who ever post their own content about issues or events in the news, a majority report taking steps to get the facts right at least sometimes.

We asked the 431 teens who ever post their own content about issues or events in the news if they take any steps to make sure they get the facts right. An overwhelming 88% say that they do so at least sometimes, including a quarter of teens who report always doing so.

There are significant differences in frequency of fact-checking when posting their own news-related social media content by media literacy exposure, news habit and age, but not by news media trust.



Teens who had at least one class with any media literacy instruction are especially likely to report taking steps to get the facts right when posting their own social media content about news. Sixty-nine percent of teens with at least some media literacy instruction say they always or often take steps to get the facts right when posting their own news-related content, compared with 49% of teens without any media literacy instruction.

Teens who actively seek out news are also more likely to say they always or often take steps to get the facts right when posting their own content about news than teens who keep up with the news without trying (i.e., “news finds me”) or teens who don’t keep up with news (73% vs. 57% and 32%, respectively).

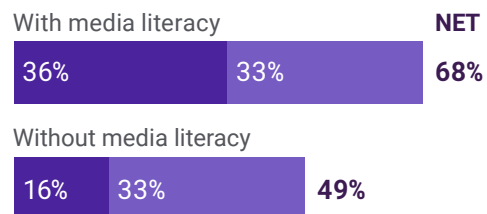
There is one notable difference in frequency of fact-checking when posting their own news-related social media content: Teens ages 15 and 16 are more likely to say they always or often take steps to get the facts right when posting their own content about news than 13- and 14-year-olds (66% vs. 42%).

Frequency of taking steps to fact-check before posting social media content about news, by media literacy exposure

When posting your own content about issues or events in the news, how often do you take steps to make sure you are getting the facts right?

■ Always ■ Often

by MEDIA LITERACY EXPOSURE



Note: Results for “With media literacy” are based on the 204 teens who said they had any classes with any media literacy instruction during the 2023-24 school year; results for “Without media literacy” are based on the 140 teens who said they did not have that instruction.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.



Most teens report engaging in at least one civic-minded activity related to media in the past year.

To learn more about their work as information creators and communicators, we presented survey-takers with a list of five civic-minded activities related to media and asked about whether they engaged in any of them in the past year. A majority (60%) report engaging in at least one of the five civic-minded activities listed. But that still means 4 in 10 either did not have the opportunity or did not choose to take any of the actions listed – actions that play a

significant role in cultivating productive civic discourse and sustaining healthy democratic dispositions.

Referencing credible sources when sharing their opinion (33%) is the top most-selected activity, followed by pushing back on misinformation when they see or hear it (30%). The two least-selected activities involve engaging with journalists and news organizations. Four percent of teens say they reached out to a journalist or news outlet to offer feedback on a story, and 2% said they had written a letter to an editor or an op-ed.

6 in 10 teens did at least one of these civic-minded activities in the past year

Note: Results do not sum to 100% because multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

% of teens who say they have done the following activities in the past year...

Referenced credible sources when sharing your opinion.

33%

Pushed back on misinformation when you saw or heard it.

30%

Worked on the school newspaper or yearbook.

20%

Reached out to a journalist or news outlet to offer feedback on a story.

4%

Wrote a letter to an editor or an op-ed.

2%

None of the above

40%



There are significant differences in civic-minded activity engagement by media literacy exposure, news habit and news media trust, but no meaningful differences by age.

Teens who had at least one class with any media literacy instruction are especially likely to have engaged in one or more civic-minded activities related to media. Seventy-four percent of teens with at least some media literacy instruction report engaging in any of the activities listed, compared with 57% of teens without any media literacy instruction. Teens who had at least

some media literacy instruction are more likely than their peers to say they engaged in the following activities:

- » Referencing credible sources when sharing an opinion.
- » Pushing back on misinformation when they saw or heard it.
- » Reaching out to journalists or news outlets to share feedback on a story.

Civic-minded activity engagement, by media literacy exposure

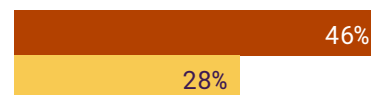
- With media literacy
- Without media literacy

Note: Results for “With media literacy” are based on the 493 teens who said they had any classes with any media literacy instruction during the 2023-24 school year; results for “Without media literacy” are based on the 340 teens who said they did not have that instruction. Results do not sum to 100% because multiple responses were allowed.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

% of teens who, in the past year, have...

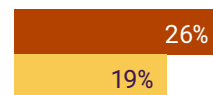
Referenced credible sources when sharing your opinion.



Pushed back on misinformation when you saw or heard it.



Worked on the school newspaper or yearbook.



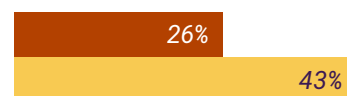
Reached out to a journalist or news outlet to offer feedback on a story.



Wrote a letter to an editor or an op-ed.



None of the above





Teens who actively seek out news and teens who have higher trust in news media are also more likely to say they had engaged in one or more civic-minded activities relating to media. Seventy-eight percent of teens who actively seek out news report engaging in any of the activities listed, compared with 66% of teens who keep up with news without trying (i.e., “news finds me”) and 44% of teens who don’t keep up with news. Teens who actively seek out news are more likely than their peers to say they engaged in the following activities:

- » Referencing credible sources when sharing an opinion.
- » Reaching out to journalists or news outlets to share feedback on a story.

Seventy-six percent of teens with high trust in news media and 63% of teens with medium trust report engaging in any of the activities listed, compared with 52% of teens with low trust in news media. Compared with their lower-trusting peers, teens with high trust in news media are more likely to say they engaged in referencing credible sources when sharing an opinion.



Recommendations



This report outlines the current state of news literacy among teens and, in doing so, uncovers opportunities to strengthen teens' news literacy skills, knowledge and habits of mind before high school graduation. Given the results of our survey, we present the following six recommendations to help achieve this goal. We also offer specific resources and actions to help policymakers, educators, journalists and researchers advance the development and teaching of news literacy in K-12 education.

1

Support robust state-level media literacy education policies.

While the importance of news and media literacy is much more widely acknowledged today than when the News Literacy Project was founded in 2008, relatively few states have taken specific steps to ensure that it is taught. We found that only 39% of teenagers can confirm that they had at least some exposure to media literacy instruction in any of their classes during the 2023-24 school year. Put differently, about 6 in 10 American teens may not have received any instruction last year in how to tell the difference between credible information and misinformation. This finding stands in stark contrast to the overwhelming support we found among teens for requiring schools to teach media literacy. A remarkable 94% say they supported such a requirement. This tells us that young people understand the value and importance of learning how to successfully navigate today's information environment and welcome systemic changes to promote news and media literacy instruction.

Our findings also suggest that teens have good reason to support widespread access to media literacy. Teens

who say they have had at least one class with any media literacy instruction are already more likely to apply news literacy in some key ways. Exposure to media literacy instruction is associated with higher trust in news media, more frequent news consumption, and an increased confidence in doing reverse image searches, a foundational verification technique. Teens with at least some media literacy instruction are also more likely to fact-check social media content before liking, sharing or posting, and are more likely to engage in civic-minded activities, such as pushing back against misinformation when they see or hear it. More research needs to be done to explore these associations, but these early findings are promising when it comes to the potential impact of media literacy instruction.

Robust state legislation is needed to ensure that all students have access to high-quality news and media literacy instruction. To reach the most students and create lifelong news literacy learners, we suggest that policymakers follow these guidelines:

1) Require both media literacy standards and instruction, supported by high quality professional development. Policies that only focus on standards may not reach the classroom level in a meaningful way, and policies that only focus on instruction may not have enough clarity and guidance on what to teach. By requiring both media literacy standards and instruction, teachers will get the clarity and support they need to provide high-quality, nonpartisan news and media literacy instruction to their students.

2) When introducing or reviewing media literacy standards, include news literacy knowledge, skills and habits of mind. News literacy covers foundational aspects of media literacy and offers clear cross-curricular connections. Students in every subject benefit from learning how to evaluate claims, evidence and sources.

RELATED NLP RESOURCES

[Framework for Teaching News Literacy:](#)

NLP's framework includes news literacy standards, essential questions, and knowledge/skills objectives, along with suggested performance tasks and learning activities.

[Grade Band Expectations for News Literacy:](#)

NLP's guide includes scaffolded skills, content knowledge and dispositions for schools and districts seeking to implement news literacy curricula.

TAKE ACTION

LEGISLATORS: Review standards, mandates and requirements in your state to find out if they are inclusive of news literacy for K-12 classrooms. If not, introduce bipartisan legislation to make sure all students in your state have access to high-quality, nonpartisan news literacy instruction.

EDUCATORS: New state standards, mandates and requirements can take time to implement. If your state has yet to pass robust news literacy education policies, why wait? Find opportunities in your current curricula to bring in news literacy lessons or try implementing a news literacy unit.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS: Ask educators, school administrators and school board members in your community about what is being done to teach news literacy in your child's school. If no concrete steps have been taken yet, try rallying support for a districtwide initiative.

2

Spend time on news literacy basics — especially distinguishing between information types.

We found that teens across all age groups struggled to accurately distinguish between different types of information, a foundational news literacy skill. Half of teens did not recognize a branded content example as an advertisement. Forty-eight percent did not understand that a column labeled “commentary” is an opinion piece. Forty-one percent of teens did not recognize sponsored search results as paid advertising. Put together, less than 2 in 10 teens correctly identified content types on all three of those tasks.

Even though teens are growing up with more access to technology and information, news literacy is not something young people naturally acquire just by spending time online. While the screenshots in our survey tasks included relatively common — and prominent — cues to signal the correct information type, the content that teens encounter in their daily lives is often less transparent. Depending on the source of information, labels disclosing advertisements or revenue-sharing arrangements might be much more subtle, opaque or missing entirely. What's more, the very design of most social media platforms produces a seemingly endless scroll of “content” in which the distinctions between different information types are made that much blurrier.

Knowing the primary purpose of different types of information and being mindful of them across contexts helps set students up for success on other, more complicated news literacy tasks. For example, students first need to establish that they are, in fact, engaging with a straight news report (and not, say, branded content or an opinion piece) before they can apply their understanding of the standards of quality journalism

to determine how much credence to give it. This skill of distinguishing between types of information is especially consequential when it comes to identifying news. Mistaking a piece of content for news that is not actually news — such as a piece of satire, an individual’s hot take about current events or the opinion of a pundit — not only can lead to misperceptions of fact, but can also fuel cynicism about the news media and drive unwarranted distrust. Partisans and others seeking to influence the public through outrage often capitalize on these kinds of misperceptions to heap unearned scorn on “the media,” exacerbating institutional distrust. This kind of reckless rhetoric also obscures more substantive issues in media criticism, including aspects of modern journalism practices that could be improved.

RELATED NLP RESOURCES

[“News Matters” Unit Plan:](#)

If you teach grades 3-6, use this three-week unit plan, produced by NLP and TIME for Kids, to build your students’ foundational news literacy skills. It includes core lessons, rich discussion prompts, collaborative group activities and challenging independent work.

[“InfoZones” \(Checkology® lesson\):](#)

Educators can use this lesson to help students determine the credibility of a piece of information by identifying its primary purpose or “InfoZone”: news, opinion, entertainment, advertising, propaganda and raw information. Log in or register for a free Checkology educator account to access this lesson.

TAKE ACTION

EDUCATORS: A great place to start teaching students how to identify different types of information is by defining each type and its primary purpose. From there, provide examples and make sure students are familiar with the common words, phrases and multimedia cues that signal an information type so they can spot the type of information in different contexts. Once they know the information type they are dealing with, students can more easily and effectively evaluate its credibility and impact. Explore our curriculum resources for more ideas on how to establish a strong foundation of news literacy concepts, skills and tools.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS: Help reinforce your child’s ability to distinguish between information types by occasionally asking them what the primary purpose is of the content they are listening to, watching or reading. Is it primarily intended to inform them, sell them a product or service, persuade them, or something else? Sometimes the primary purpose can be hard to determine, or there might appear to be more than one purpose at play, which can lead to great discussions!

JOURNALISTS: Consider how clearly your news organization presents the different types of information it publishes, such as straight news reports, opinion pieces and both traditional and nontraditional advertisements. Be sure to check how transparent these differences are across your newsroom’s social media accounts too. If it’s not always clear to your audience, try encouraging your editors or publishers to apply more robust and intuitive labeling of each kind of content.

3

Foster an appreciation for the role a free press plays in democracy.

The results of our First Amendment knowledge questions suggest that teens are generally aware of press freedoms and what they protect. The majority (78%) can identify freedom of the press as a First Amendment right. Out of the five freedoms, only freedom of speech and religion are more recognized among teens. Most teens (66%) are also able to correctly identify a scenario describing a clear violation of freedom of the press: “A journalist is arrested as punishment for reporting evidence of corruption in the government.”

Despite having a general awareness of freedom of the press and what it protects, many teens demonstrated antipathy or indifference toward the press. Nearly half of teens (45%) say they think news organizations do more to harm democracy than protect it. And when asked how concerned they are about the sharp decline in the number of news organizations over the last 20 years, the majority (67%) say they are only a little or not at all concerned.

Even though most teens have some awareness of First Amendment press protections, the survey results suggest that they may not fully understand the watchdog role that a free press plays in a democratic society, serving as a check on government and corporate power in the United States. Press freedoms also ensure that the public has access to sources of news that are independent of the government and that, if they live up to their ideals, strive to serve the public good.

When we asked teens to rank where they thought the U.S. fell in terms of its degree of press freedoms compared with other countries around the world, the results varied widely. Only 14% of teens are within 10 places of the most recent ranking of U.S. press freedoms in Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index (#55 in the world in 2024). About a third of teens (36%) rank the U.S. as having stronger press freedoms than its independent ranking and about a half (51%) rank it as having weaker press freedoms.

A democracy that lacks a robust free press is a democracy in peril. We believe that one of the biggest existential threats to America's Fourth Estate is a lack of public understanding of what distinguishes quality journalism from other types of information about current issues and events. This lack of news literacy has almost certainly contributed to a lack of demand for standards-based news and, thus, to the dramatic decline in the number of local newspapers over the last 20 years. It is vital that we give students an accurate understanding of what credible, watchdog reporting looks like (by highlighting examples of it) and, by extension, an understanding of the vital role a free and independent press plays in holding powerful interests accountable to the broader public. Unless we are able to build this broad-based understanding, it's likely that the decline in standards-based news sources, particularly at the local level, will continue and present an even larger threat to our democracy.



RELATED NLP RESOURCES

[“Press Freedoms Around the World” \(Checkology lesson\):](#)

Educators can use this lesson to help students explore the state of press freedoms in 22 nations, including videos of journalists in 10 countries recounting their reporting experiences. Log in or register a free Checkology educator account to access this lesson.

[“Democracy’s Watchdog” \(Checkology lesson\):](#)

Educators can use this lesson to help students learn about the historic watchdog role that a free press has played in the U.S. by exploring a collection of investigative reports spanning more than a century. Log in or register for a free Checkology educator account to access this lesson.

[“Storm Lake” discussion guide on the importance of local journalism:](#)

This guide serves as a companion for viewing the PBS documentary *Storm Lake*, which explores the challenges of sustaining local journalism and showcases the value these newsrooms provide, both to their communities and to American democracy.



TAKE ACTION

EDUCATORS: Investigative journalism is a powerful illustration of the impact press freedoms have on our lives. These watchdog reports can help you teach not only about First Amendment freedoms but also about literacy concepts and historical events. Determine where there are opportunities in your curriculum to bring in these kinds of reports.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS: Discuss notable examples of investigative reporting with your children. Find local or national youth organizations, such as Teens for Press Freedom, that are dedicated to protecting press freedoms and see if your child would like to join an event or become a member.

JOURNALISTS: Take stock of how you share and explain the work you do. Is the impact of your reporting being shared on platforms that are popular among young people, such as TikTok, YouTube and Instagram?

4

Foster an understanding of standards-based journalism as a practice that is designed to produce credible information.

We asked three questions in our survey to learn more about teen trust in news media and found that more teens had low trust (35%) than high trust (8%). As mentioned earlier, other national surveys show that teens are not alone in having general feelings of distrust toward news media in the United States. Trust in institutions like the press can be affected by a myriad of factors, but the two questions in our news media trust index that had the most distrusting responses from teens were both about perceptions of news media bias. The majority (80%) do not consider journalists to be less biased than other people who create content about current events. Even more concerning: More than two-thirds of teens (69%) say that news organizations intentionally add bias to their coverage and only present the facts that support their own supposed perspective.

Perceptions of news media bias are especially prone to being shaped by misunderstandings about the practice of journalism or by people's personal views and biases. Mistakes people can make when assessing the impartiality of news include: Failing to distinguish between opinion journalism and hard news reporting; mistaking opinions expressed by sources quoted in a news story as those of the reporter or outlet; or judging coverage of a complex, ongoing story by a single story. People are also predisposed to interpret coverage through the lens of their own biases, which is one reason why a single news report will sometimes attract conflicting accusations of bias from individuals with divergent views or beliefs. It also helps explain why perceptions of bias in news are almost always negative; people generally think news is biased against their views, and almost never in favor of them.

It's certainly the responsibility of journalists and other newsroom professionals to earn and keep public trust by consistently producing high-quality, standards-based reporting; but it's also the public's responsibility to recognize high-quality, standards-based reporting when they hear or see it — especially when it conflicts with or complicates their own beliefs or opinions. To adequately prepare young people to assume this important civic responsibility, they need news literacy instruction that does the following:

1) Anchor instruction in as accurate and comprehensive an understanding of the practice of journalism as possible.

This includes not only what its practitioners do well, but also the field's major problems, challenges, debates and shortcomings. Doing so will help students understand journalism as a rigorous profession that is always evolving in pursuit of its own often unattainable ideals.

2) Center the ethical guidelines and standards of quality journalism in your instruction to give students a nuanced understanding of the characteristics of credible news.

Explore why journalists confirm details with multiple, high-quality sources; how transparency, independence and accountability enhance credibility; and examine elements of reporting that demonstrate a concern for fairness or a painstaking commitment to accuracy. Challenge assumptions that news sources must be perfect to be credible and disrupt the cynical notion that all news sources are driven by concealed motives. Teach students to apply the ideals of journalism to test the credibility of non-news sources and content.

3) Provide opportunities for students to engage with news coverage and reputable journalists.

By analyzing news reports, students can practice using the standards of quality journalism to identify a report's strengths and weaknesses and make a determination about its credibility. In engaging with journalists, students can hear firsthand about how newsroom professionals understand their work and how seriously they regard the standards of quality journalism. Students may also learn more about the resources and effort it takes to do responsible, original reporting.

 RELATED NLP RESOURCES

Newsroom to Classroom:

These visits are an opportunity for students to get news literacy instruction straight from the experts on dozens of topics, including misinformation, social media issues, the watchdog role of the press, the standards of quality journalism, the First Amendment and more. Log in or register a free Checkology educator account to invite a journalist to share their expertise and experience with your students.

Story explorers: Evaluate news coverage:

In this classroom activity, students select an event or issue in the news that interests them, then split into research teams to collect and evaluate coverage of the subject from different news organizations.

“Practicing Quality Journalism” (Checkology lesson):

Educators can use this lesson to help students learn the standards of quality journalism by playing the role of reporter in a game-like simulation of a breaking news event. Log in or register for a free Checkology educator account to access this lesson.

 TAKE ACTION

EDUCATORS: Register for a free Checkology educator account and invite a journalist to your classroom to share their expertise and experience with your students.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS: Encourage your child to get more involved with journalism by trying things out like writing a letter to an editor or an op-ed or by joining the school newspaper or yearbook.

JOURNALISTS: Help promote news literacy among young people by sharing your expertise directly with students. Consider volunteering for a program like NLP’s Newsroom to Classroom, which connects journalists with educators and students for news literacy conversations.

5

Build and strengthen defenses against conspiracy theories and other forms of viral misinformation.

The fact that an overwhelming majority of teens on social media (80%) are exposed to posts that spread or promote conspiracy theories is alarming and should not be ignored. Many of the conspiracy theories teens report encountering online are not just harmless superstitions — they are often gateways into dangerously captivating falsehoods that can be rooted in longstanding extremist tropes and narratives. Young people need to know how to avoid the cognitive traps that can make baseless and harmful conjecture seem compelling — a vulnerability that can send them down rabbit holes or connect them with dangerous online communities. Conspiracy theories are often inherently appealing to people. When the facts of an event are complicated and nuanced, conspiracy theories offer simple “good vs. evil” narratives. When experts are still investigating or struggling to come to an agreement about an issue or event, conspiracy theories offer a false sense of certainty. When individuals feel isolated and lonely, conspiracy theories offer a strong sense of community and a reassuringly superior sense of identity.

Our findings suggest that teens are far from immune to what makes these narratives compelling. Eighty-one percent of teens say they are inclined to believe one or more of the conspiracy theories they see in their social media feeds. And when asked about a recently popular conspiracy theory — the notion that the Super Bowl and other NFL playoff games are rigged — roughly half (48%) say it is probably or definitely true.

Belief in conspiracy theories is not always easily remedied with access to accurate and credible information. Conspiracy theories can be very attractive to highly informed, critical thinkers — individuals who actively and adeptly seek out patterns and connections.

To best defend themselves against the siren song of conspiracy theories, young people need to be aware of the ways these ideas appeal to our innate instincts to understand and belong. This is why we recommend teaching young people about *conspiratorial thinking* – the cognitive biases, faulty thought patterns and natural psychological needs that lead people to see meaningful evidence where there is none.

This type of “prebunking” or pre-emptive approach to teaching students to recognize the characteristics of falsehoods can be broadly applied to help them recognize and resist other forms of misinformation, including viral falsehoods online that attempt to pass off tricks of context or manipulated imagery as actual evidence for a claim.



RELATED NLP RESOURCES

[“Conspiratorial Thinking” \(Checkology lesson\):](#)

Educators can use this lesson to help students learn to recognize conspiracy theories and explain what makes people vulnerable to conspiratorial thinking.

[RumorGuard®:](#)

Timely alerts debunking recent viral rumors, designed to easily share with your students, colleagues, friends and family.

[News Lit Quiz: Avoid the trap of conspiratorial thinking:](#)

This quiz is designed to help people learn to recognize conspiratorial thinking and understand its consequences.



TAKE ACTION

EDUCATORS: Use resources like the Checkology lesson “Conspiratorial Thinking” to safely tackle this topic in a way that does not focus on conspiracy theories themselves, but rather focuses on the psychology behind conspiratorial beliefs. Explore our curriculum resources for more ideas on how to help students protect themselves from baseless conspiracy theories and other kinds of viral misinformation.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS: If your child is on social media, try having a regular check-in to ask them about or have them show you what kinds of content they are interested in or are seeing in their feeds regularly. If you notice an

increase in misinformation or conspiracy theory rhetoric, discuss with them the hazards of this type of content. Encourage them to unfollow accounts that promote harmful content and like or share content from trustworthy accounts instead. These small adjustments can help recalibrate what their social media algorithm serves them.

LEGISLATORS: There are few laws regulating the spread of misinformation and conspiracy theories on social media platforms. Introduce or support bipartisan legislation that requires social media companies to take concrete actions to protect users, especially those under the age of 18, from this type of content online.

6

Teach students the personal and civic benefits of staying actively engaged with standards-based news.

When it comes to seeking, sharing and producing information, teens who actively seek out news are more likely to engage in other healthy news literacy habits. Active news seekers are more likely to say they engaged in one or more civic-minded activities related to media, especially referencing credible sources when sharing an opinion and reaching out to a journalist or news outlet to offer feedback on coverage. For social media users, being an active news seeker is associated with following more journalists and news organizations, more frequently liking, sharing and posting about issues or events in the news and more frequently fact-checking content before doing so. More research needs to be done to explore these associations, but these early findings suggest that there is a relationship between being an active news consumer and positively engaging with and contributing to the information landscape in other ways.

Unfortunately, our results also showed that most teens are not yet active seekers of news. Over 8 in 10 teens (85%) are either keeping up with news without really trying or are not keeping up with it. It should

be noted, though, that this study stopped short of exploring how teens think about active versus passive news consumption in the age of algorithmically driven social media feeds. Social media users' active digital decisions can increase their in-platform exposure to standards-based news, such as following news organizations and journalists, joining news-sharing groups, and liking or sharing posts that include links to quality news coverage. At the same time, these digital decisions can cause suggestion algorithms to push more news into users' feeds, effectively setting the stage for more passive news consumption. More research needs to be done to explore whether and how teens think about the role that social media algorithms can play when it comes to their own news habits.

News literacy practitioners aspire to help young people positively and responsibly interact with and contribute to the information environment and, by proxy, their local and virtual communities. With this goal in mind, a habit like regularly engaging with news appears to help set teens up for success. Regardless of how teens get news, they need to learn to build healthy news diets comprised of standards-based news reports, high-quality opinion pieces and the understanding that it's OK to take intentional breaks from news.

RELATED NLP RESOURCES

[The Sift®:](#)

A free weekly newsletter for educators delivered during the school year that offers a rundown of the latest topics in news literacy – including trends and issues in misinformation, social media, artificial intelligence, journalism and press freedom. It provides discussion prompts, teaching ideas, classroom guides and a video series that features professional journalists.



TAKE ACTION

EDUCATORS: Set aside regular time each week to engage students with news and current events. National news outlets often have resources specifically designed for students or, if you are looking for a guide to the week in news literacy, subscribe to The Sift and get classroom-ready discussion prompts, teaching ideas and more.

PARENTS/GUARDIANS: Encourage your child to explore different ways to engage with news to see what works for them. If you don't have one already, consider getting a subscription to your local newspaper so you can discuss recent stories that might interest them. If your child is on social media, discuss with them the ways that following professional journalists, standards-based news organizations and other credible sources can improve their online experiences. After a few weeks, reflect together on any changes they notice in their awareness of current events. Even just sharing with them how you like to engage with news can help model what having healthy news habits looks like.



Methods



This study was conducted between May 17-28, 2024, with a sample of 1,110 teens ages 13-18 through an online survey administered by SSRS. Respondents ages 13 to 17 were recruited via their parents using the SSRS Opinion Panel, a nationally representative probability-based group of randomly selected and verified respondents. Once parent/guardian consent was obtained, an invitation was sent to the teen to complete the survey. Respondents aged 18 were recruited directly via the SSRS Opinion Panel. Respondents participated via self-administered web surveys in English.

Data were weighted to represent the adolescent (13-18) population of the United States. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is ± 4.1 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Margins of error for subgroups will be larger.

Sampling

The target population for this survey was U.S. adolescents, ages 13 to 18. The teen recruitment via parents and the surveys among those age 18 were conducted using the [SSRS Opinion Panel](#), a nationally representative panel of U.S. adults age 18 or older. SSRS Opinion Panel members are recruited randomly based on a nationally representative ABS (Address Based Sample) probability design (including Hawaii and Alaska). Additional panelists are recruited via random digit dial (RDD) telephone sample of prepaid cell phone numbers.

Respondents ages 13 to 17 were recruited via their parents using the SSRS Opinion Panel. Parent panelists were emailed an invitation to complete the screener online and the email for each respondent included a unique passcode-embedded link. If they had an adolescent who qualified for the survey, and the parent consented to having them participate, the parent shared the teen's email address and an invitation was sent directly to the teen. If parents had multiple teens ages

13-17 eligible to participate, only one teen was randomly selected to be invited to participate. Adolescents age 18, who are panelists themselves, received an email invitation to complete the survey, which included a unique passcode-embedded link. Participants were offered a small incentive (in the form of a \$10 electronic gift card) in appreciation of their participation.

Questionnaire development

NLP developed the questionnaire. SSRS provided feedback regarding question wording, order, clarity and other topics pertaining to questionnaire quality. Once the questionnaire was finalized, the survey was programmed into SSRS's Conformat platform for online administration. Extensive checking of the program was conducted to ensure that skip patterns followed the design of the questionnaire, all the language inserts were working properly and all questions with images were displayed in a user-friendly way.

Data collection

SSRS first conducted a "soft launch" of the survey, inviting a limited number of panelists to participate. After checking soft launch data to ensure that all questionnaire content and skip patterns were correct, the remaining sample was released. Reminder emails and texts were sent to those who did not complete the survey after being sent the initial invitation.

The data collection field period for this survey was May 17-28, 2024.

Data quality checks

The SSRS project team performed multiple data quality checks, including confirming that skip patterns were correctly followed and reviews of “speeders,” open-ended responses and the internal response rate (number of questions answered divided by the number of questions asked). The SSRS team also ran logic checks to check for inconsistencies across questions. After all quality control measures were completed, no cases were removed.

Weighting

Data were weighted to represent the adolescent (13-18) population of the U.S. The data were weighted by applying a base weight and balancing the demographic profile of the sample to target population parameters.

Data were weighted to distributions of the 13-17 and 18-year-old reported sex by age and race. Additionally, data were weighted to distributions of the 13–17-year-old parent’s and 18-year-old’s reported education, sex by education, age by education, region, civic engagement, population density, number of 13–17-year-olds in household, home tenure and internet use frequency.

Margin of error and response rate

Post-data collection statistical adjustments require analysis procedures that reflect departures from simple random sampling. SSRS calculates the effects of these design features so that an appropriate adjustment can be incorporated into tests of statistical significance when using these data. The so-called “design effect” represents the loss in statistical efficiency that results from a disproportionate sample design and systematic non-response. The total sample design effect for this survey is 1.98.

The survey’s margin of error is the largest 95% confidence interval for any estimated proportion based on the total sample – the one around 50%. For example, the margin of error for the entire sample is ± 4.1 percentage points. This means that in 95 out of every 100 samples drawn using the same

methodology, estimated proportions based on the entire sample will be no more than 4.1 percentage points away from their true values in the population. Margins of error for subgroups will be larger.

The cooperation rate for this survey is calculated to be 24%. The cooperation rate is calculated by dividing the number of completed interviews by the total amount of eligible sample. The cumulative response rate for the survey is 1%, using American Association for Public Opinion Research’s (AAPOR) Response Rate 3 formula, which accounts for response rates to initial panelist recruitment for parents and 18-year-olds.

Open-ended responses

The survey included two open-ended questions that invited respondents to offer responses in their own words. These responses were manually coded by researchers from NLP. Both questions involved two cycles of coding: an initial round of descriptive coding followed by a round of pattern coding to group codes into categories. For the open-ended question about trusted news sources, there were 723 sources categorized as outlets, 533 categorized as formats and 56 categorized as individuals. For the open-ended question about conspiracy theories, there were 778 examples categorized by topic, which included the 561 examples with enough detail to be categorized by both narrative and topic.



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About the News Literacy Project

The News Literacy Project is a nonpartisan nonprofit building a national movement to ensure that all students are skilled in news literacy before high school graduation, giving them the knowledge and ability to participate in civic society as well-informed, critical thinkers. Founded in 2008, NLP is the country's leading provider of news literacy education and works with educators in all 50 states.



About SSRS

SSRS is a full-service social science and market research firm managed by a core of dedicated professionals with advanced degrees in the social sciences. SSRS designs and implements solutions to complex strategic, tactical, public opinion and policy issues in the U.S. and worldwide. In the industry, SSRS is renowned for its sophisticated sample designs and its experience with all facets of data collection, including qualitative research, mixed methods and multimodal formats.

Appendix



Sample Sizes: News Literacy Subgroups

	Unweighted sample size
Total teens	1,110
MEDIA LITERACY EXPOSURE	
With media literacy	493
Without media literacy	340
NEWS HABIT	
Actively seek out news	172
News finds me	558
Don't keep up with news	380
NEWS MEDIA TRUST INDEX	
High trust	100
Medium trust	667
Low trust	343

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.

Sample Sizes: Demographic Subgroups

	Unweighted sample size
Total teens	1,110
AGE	
13-14	344
15-16	479
17-18	287
GENDER	
Girls/women	554
Boys/men	551
RACE/ETHNICITY	
Black	197
Hispanic	250
White	510
Other race/ethnicity	123

Note: In this analysis, white and Black teens, as well as those who identify with another race, are all non-Hispanic. Hispanic teens can be of any race.

Source: SSRS survey for the News Literacy Project conducted online from May 17 - 28, 2024, with 1,110 teenagers ages 13-18 nationwide.