

Young



Young Adults' News Behaviors and Beliefs

Adults'



Young Adults' News Behaviors and Beliefs

News



Young Adults' News Behaviors and Beliefs

Behaviors



Young Adults' News Behaviors and Beliefs

& Beliefs



Young Adults' News Behaviors and Beliefs



KNIGHT
FOUNDATION

Contents

3	Executive Summary
5	What Information People Share and Why
9	News Sources and Bias
12	Concerns about Reporting on Race and Ethnicity
16	How Young Adults Use the News

Executive Summary

Dispelling the notion that young adults don't pay attention to news, a new survey shows 88 percent of people ages 18-34 access news at least weekly, including 53 percent who do so every day. Hispanic and black young adults are more likely to share news with friends on social media.

Young adults of all races are highly digital news consumers, finding their news on social media, smartphone alerts or news websites. The most popular reasons young adults share news are because they find it interesting, helpful, or entertaining. However, highly partisan young adults are more likely than their peers to share news that confirms with others' opinions.

Young adults often do not believe that their race or ethnicity is covered regularly in the media, even in their favorite news sources. In addition, a sizeable portion of young adults, especially many Hispanics and African Americans, say they see inaccuracies and irregularities in the coverage of their racial or ethnic communities.

The findings come from a recent Knight Foundation survey conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago. The nationally representative survey of 1,660 adults age 18–34 includes oversamples of African Americans and Hispanics in order to explore news behavior and beliefs of young adults within and across races and ethnicities. In addition, the study measures the impact of personal identities and psychological predispositions on young adults' perceptions of news and news behaviors.

Many young adults have concerns about the ideological and political leanings of news sources, according to the survey. A majority believes certain news sources have ideological positions, divide society, and hurt democracy.

When asked about their most liked and least liked news sources, young adults believe news sources—even their favorite ones—have a liberal or conservative slant. Democrats are more likely to perceive an ideological slant to their news sources. Fifty-seven percent of Democrats see their favorite news source as liberal, while 36 percent of Republicans perceive their favorite source as conservative. More Democrats say their least liked source is very conservative than Republicans say their least liked source is very liberal (75 percent vs. 68 percent).

And young adults are more likely to say their least liked source divides the country than they are to say their favorite news source unites the country, even though most people rarely interact with their least liked source.

Young adults are more likely to have strong negative views of their least liked source than positive views of their favorite source. About 45 percent say their favorite source is neither liberal nor conservative, while 75 percent say their least liked source is liberal or conservative.

The findings also illustrate that ethnic news media is a key source for young Hispanic and African Americans, particularly those who have strong beliefs about race and personal experience with discrimination. Young African Americans and Hispanics who say they regularly experience racial discrimination are more likely to seek out racial or ethnic media sources that explore issues from their perspective.

A majority of young adults use their favorite news source at least a moderate amount to decide what candidates to vote for and what policies to support, and young African Americans are especially likely to act on information from the media.

Young adults with strong partisan and racial identities are more likely to rely on news to make decisions. Strong political partisans are also more likely to rely on news sources to decide which policies or candidates to support.

The four pieces of this report follow:

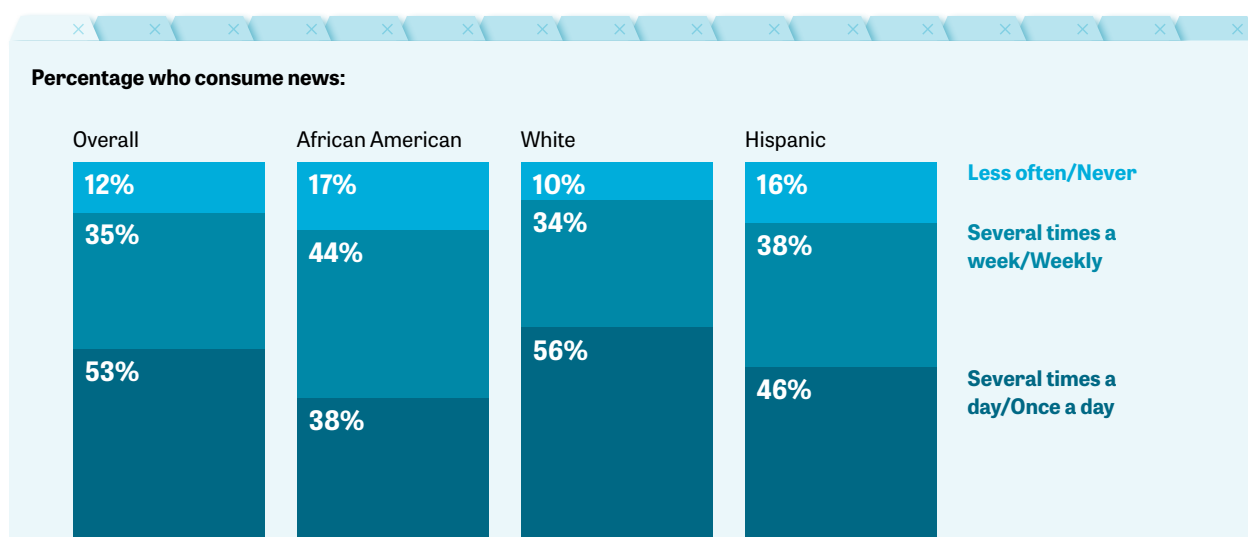
- *What Information People Share and Why*
- *News Sources and Bias*
- *Concerns About Reporting on Race and Ethnicity*
- *How Young Adults Use the News*

What Information People Share and Why

MOST YOUNG ADULTS FOLLOW NEWS FREQUENTLY AND ARE HIGHLY DIGITAL CONSUMERS.

Most young adults of all races consume news at least weekly, and the study findings dispel the notion that young adults do not pay attention to news. Eighty-eight percent of young adults access news at least weekly, including 53 percent who do so every day.

Most young adults consume news frequently.



QUESTION Now, thinking specifically about news that covers important issues related to your community, the nation, or the world, do you generally watch, read, or hear news about these important issues...?

SOURCE Nationally representative survey of 1,660 adults age 18-34 conducted March 19-April 12, 2018, by NORC at the University of Chicago with funding from Knight Foundation

Individuals with high confidence in the news media are much more likely to access news. Ninety-seven percent of those with a great deal of confidence in the news consume the news on a weekly basis. Yet, even among the 34 percent of young adults who report having no confidence in the news, 84 percent still access news at least weekly.

Political interest is also a strong factor in one's likelihood to access all forms of news. Eighty-two percent of young adults who are somewhat or very interested in politics consume news at least daily, compared to 54 percent of those with moderate interest and 33 percent of those with little interest in politics.

Young adults tend to get news through digital media. The most popular forms of getting news for 18 to 34-year-olds are reading links on social media sites (74 percent at least weekly), visiting Internet-only news websites (70 percent), and getting news alerts on a smartphone (55 percent).

As for getting news on specific social media sites, young African Americans are more likely to read news on Twitter than their white and Hispanic counterparts. Forty percent of young African Americans adults get news on Twitter at least once a week, compared to 27 percent of Hispanics and 26 percent of whites.

While partisanship does not impact news consumption, identifying as a strong Republican or strong Democrat—rather than a moderate Democrat/Republican or an independent—is related to the likelihood to very frequently read news on social media. Thirty-two percent of young adults with a strong party identification see and read links to news articles on Facebook and other social media sites several times a day, compared to 18 percent of those with a weaker level of party identification or non-partisans.

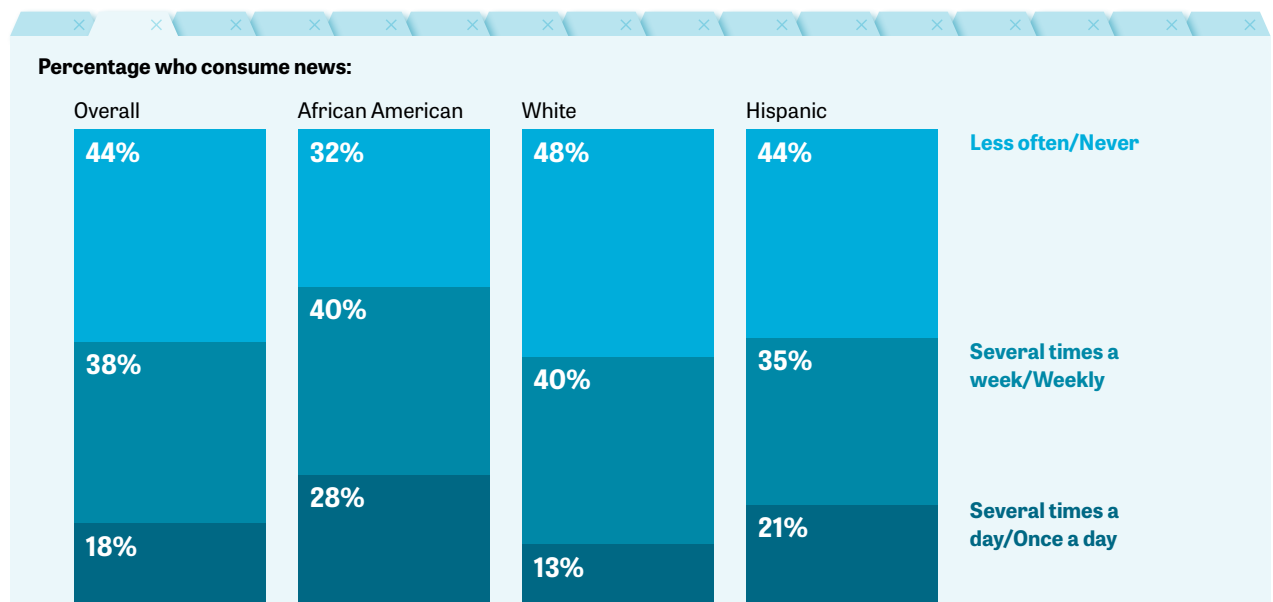
MORE THAN HALF OF YOUNG ADULTS SHARE NEWS WITH OTHERS, AND AFRICAN AMERICANS AND NEWS JUNKIES ARE PARTICULARLY LIKELY TO SHARE NEWS.

A majority of young adults share news regularly with their friends, family, and social networks. Fifty-six percent of young adults share news stories at least weekly, 18 percent of whom share news every day.

Young African Americans share news more often than young whites or Hispanics.¹ Sixty-eight percent of young African Americans share news at least weekly, compared to 52 percent of whites and 56 percent of Hispanics.

¹ As with any survey, news events occurring before or during the field period may have impacted respondents' reporting of their own news-sharing behavior. However, greater levels of sharing among African Americans are consistent with [previous research](#).

Young African Americans share news at higher rates than other young adults.



QUESTION How often do you share news stories you've seen with other people, such as friends, family, or social media followers?

SOURCE Nationally representative survey of 1,660 adults age 18-34 conducted March 19–April 12 2018 by NORC at the University of Chicago with funding from The Knight Foundation

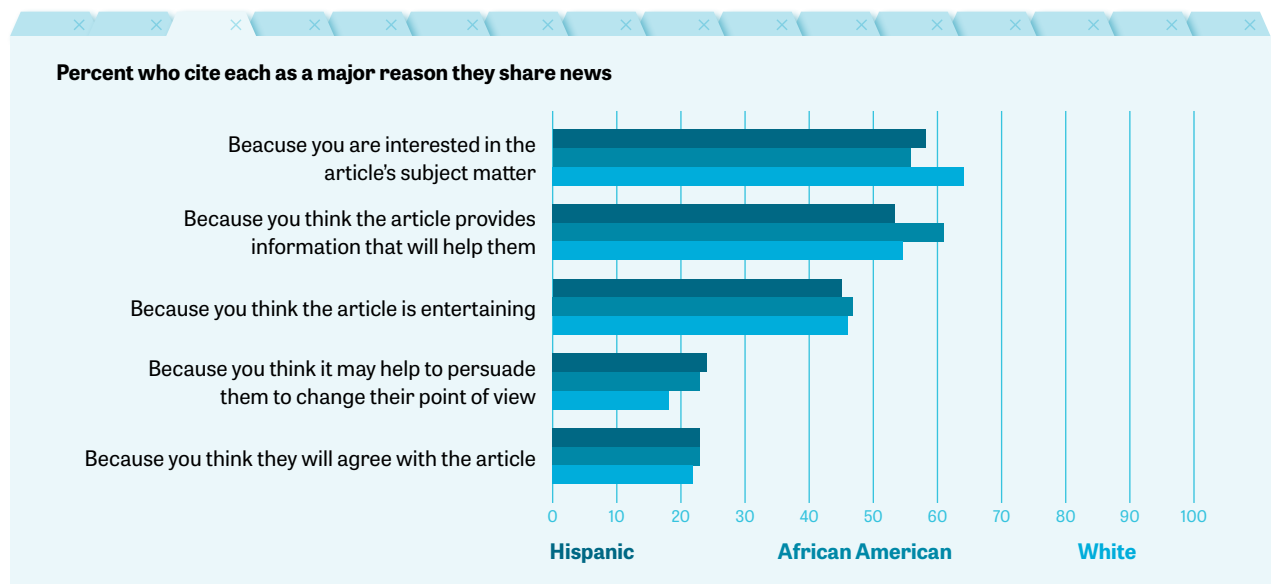
Those that read the news more often are much more likely to share it with others, after accounting for other demographic factors. Fifty-nine percent of those that get news at least weekly share news regularly, while only 37 percent of those that get news less than weekly report that they share news regularly. Similarly, 64 percent of those that view keeping up with the news as very personally important share news at least weekly, compared to 49 percent of those that attach less importance to following news.

MANY YOUNG ADULTS SHARE NEWS BECAUSE IT'S INTERESTING OR HELPFUL, NOT TO PERSUADE OR CONFIRM OTHERS' BELIEFS.

Young adults cite a variety of reasons for sharing news. Finding an article interesting, helpful, or entertaining are the most popular reasons young adults share news.

Nearly two-thirds of young adults (63 percent) say a major reason they share news is because they find it interesting, while around half of young adults share news with others primarily because they think the article is helpful (57 percent) or entertaining (47 percent). Only about 1 in 5 young adults share news primarily to persuade one to change viewpoints or confirm their existing viewpoints.

The reasons young adults share news is similar across racial and ethnic groups.



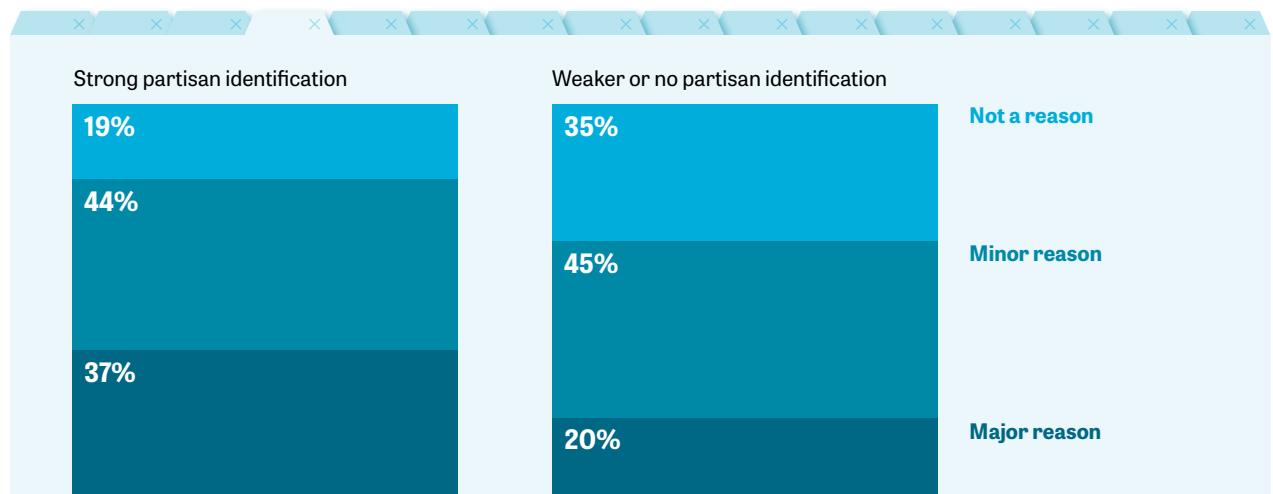
QUESTION Is each of the following a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason that you share news stories with people?

SOURCE Nationally representative survey of 1,660 adults age 18-34 conducted March 19-April 12 2018 by NORC at the University of Chicago with funding from The Knight Foundation

STRENGTH OF PARTISANSHIP RELATES TO THE LIKELIHOOD YOUNG ADULTS SHARE NEWS TO REINFORCE OTHERS' VIEWS.

While partisanship does not impact the likelihood to share news to confirm or alter others' views, the degree to which young adults identify with a political party does have such an effect. Thirty-seven percent of young adults who identify strongly as Democrats or Republicans say a major reason they share news is because they think the other person will agree with it, compared to only 20 percent of those with a weaker or no party identification.

Strong partisans are more likely to say they share news because they think the recipient will agree with it.



QUESTION Is each of the following a major reason, a minor reason, or not a reason that you share news stories with people?

SOURCE Nationally representative survey of 1,660 adults age 18-34 conducted March 19-April 12, 2018, by NORC at the University of Chicago with funding from Knight Foundation

News Sources and Bias

MANY YOUNG ADULTS BELIEVE NEWS SOURCES, EVEN THEIR FAVORITE SOURCE, HAVE A LIBERAL OR CONSERVATIVE IDEOLOGICAL SLANT.

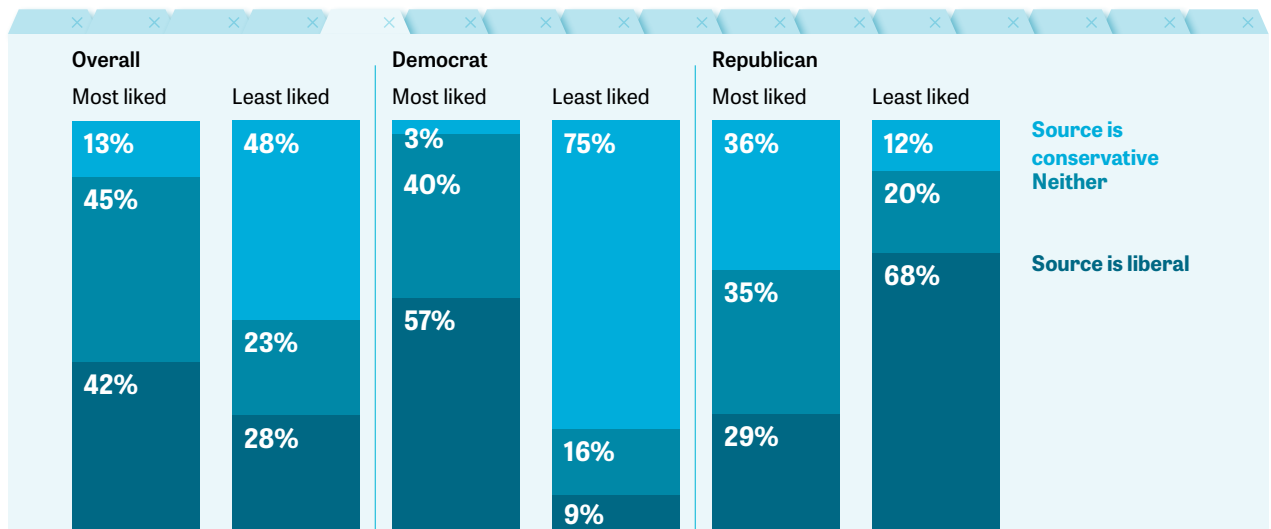
The survey asked a series of questions about young adults' most and least liked news sources in order to understand their opinion about specific outlets they use rather than just their general attitudes about the news media.

Majorities of young adults see both their most and least liked sources as having a particular ideological leaning.

Overall, about 45 percent of young adults say their most liked news source is neither liberal nor conservative whereas 42 percent say it is liberal and 13 percent say it is conservative. They are much more likely to see their least liked source as holding a conservative slant. Only 23 percent feel their least liked source is neutral.

There are stark differences based on young adults' political affiliations. Democrats are especially likely to perceive an ideological slant to their most and least liked/favorite sources. Fifty-seven percent of Democrats see their favorite news source as liberal, while 36 percent of Republicans perceive their favorite news source as very or somewhat conservative. Also, more Democrats say their least liked source is very conservative than Republicans say their least liked source is very liberal (75 percent vs. 68 percent).

Partisan young adults have contrasting views on the ideological leanings of their news sources.



QUESTION Do you think [NAME OF MOST LIKED SOURCE/NAME OF LEAST LIKED SOURCE] is very liberal, somewhat liberal, neither liberal nor conservative, somewhat conservative, or very conservative?

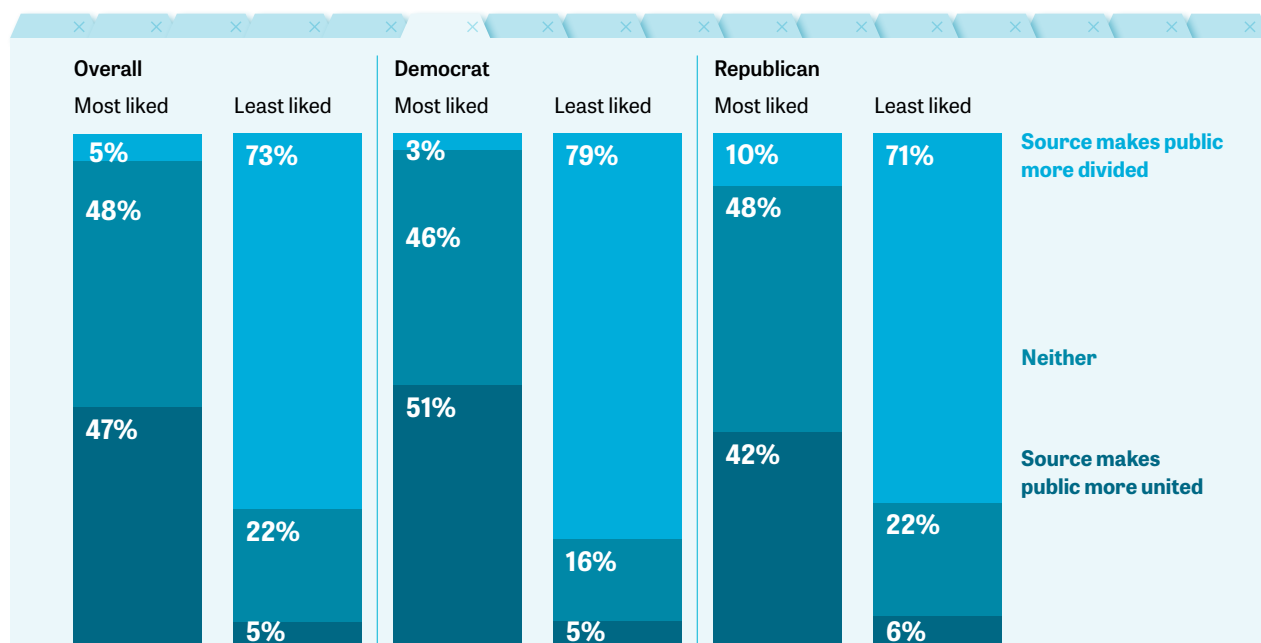
SOURCE Nationally representative survey of 1,660 adults age 18-34 conducted March 19-April 12, 2018, by NORC at the University of Chicago with funding from Knight Foundation

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE WORRIED ABOUT THE IMPACTS OF THEIR LEAST LIKED SOURCES ON DEMOCRACY

In addition to the perceived ideological bias of their least liked sourced, many young people worry about the impact these sources are having on the country.

When it comes to feelings of division in the country, young adults are more likely to say their least liked news source divides the country than they are to say their favorite news source unites the country. Overall, 73 percent say their least liked source divides the country, and only 47 percent say their favorite source helps unite it. When comparing partisan attitudes, 51 percent of Democrats say their favorite source unites the public while 42 percent of Republicans say the same.

Young adults are more likely to say their least liked news source divides the country than they are to say their favorite news source unites the country.



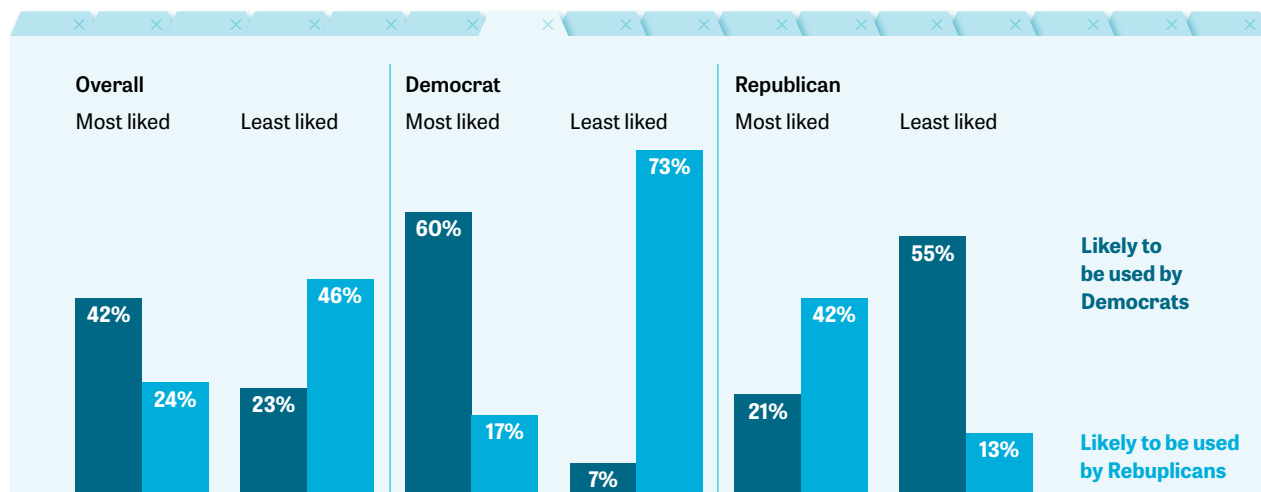
QUESTION Would you say the news coverage in [NAME OF MOST LIKED SOURCE/NAME OF LEAST LIKED SOURCE] makes the public...

SOURCE Nationally representative survey of 1,660 adults age 18-34 conducted March 19-April 12, 2018, by NORC at the University of Chicago with funding from Knight Foundation

Young adults also perceive differences in the makeup of these sources' audiences, suggesting concerns that the news is adding to polarization. Forty-two percent say Democrats are likely to use their most liked source, compared with 24 percent who say the same about Republicans. For their least liked source, it's the opposite: 46 percent say Republicans are likely to use it, 23 percent for Democrats.

But between partisans this difference is more evident. Sixty percent of Democrats think their most liked source is likely to be used by Democrats and 73 percent say their least liked source is predominantly used by Republicans. Forty-two percent of Republicans think their most liked source is also used by Republicans, while 55 percent think their least liked source is used by Democrats.

Young adults perceive polarization in the audience of their most and least liked news sources.

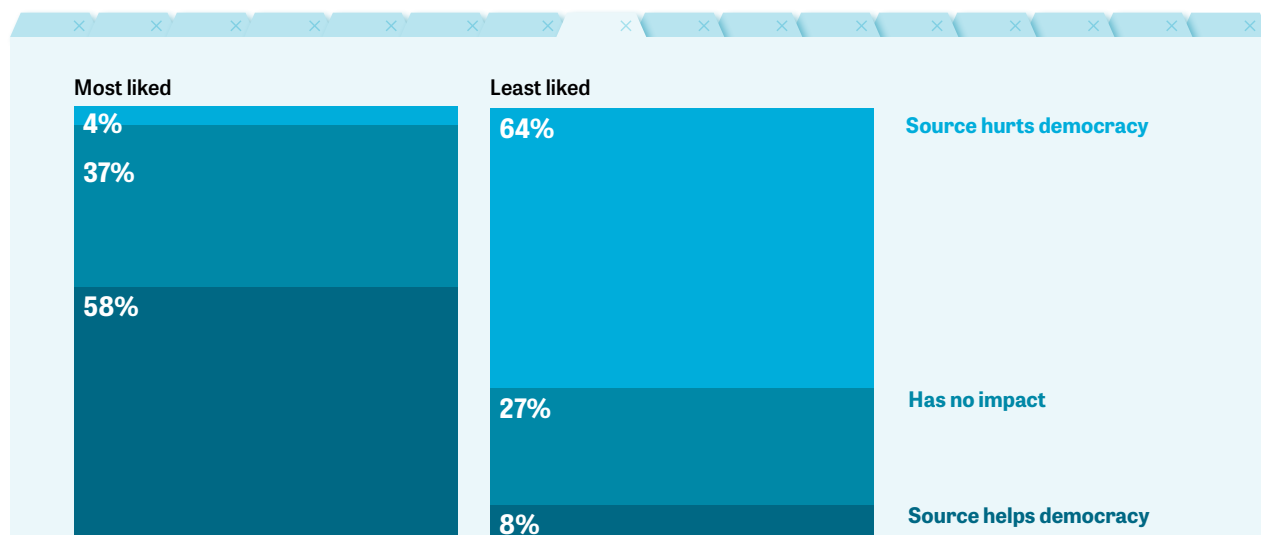


QUESTION From what you know about [NAME OF MOST LIKED SOURCE/NAME OF LEAST LIKED SOURCE], please tell me how likely each of the following types of people are to use it as a news source? Would you say...?

SOURCE Nationally representative survey of 1,660 adults age 18-34 conducted March 19-April 12, 2018, by NORC at the University of Chicago with funding from Knight Foundation

Young people were also asked whether their most and least liked sources help or hurt democracy. Fifty-eight percent of young adults believe their favorite news source helps democracy and 4 percent think it hurts democracy. When it comes to their least liked source, 64 percent say it hurts democracy while 8 percent say it helps democracy.

Many young adults say their least liked news sources hurt democracy.



QUESTIONS

Would you say the news coverage in [MOST/LEAST LIKED SOURCE] makes the public...

Would you say [MOST/LEAST LIKED SOURCE]...

SOURCE National survey conducted by NORC at the University of Chicago with funding from Knight Foundation March 19-April 12, 2018, with 1,660 adults age 18-34

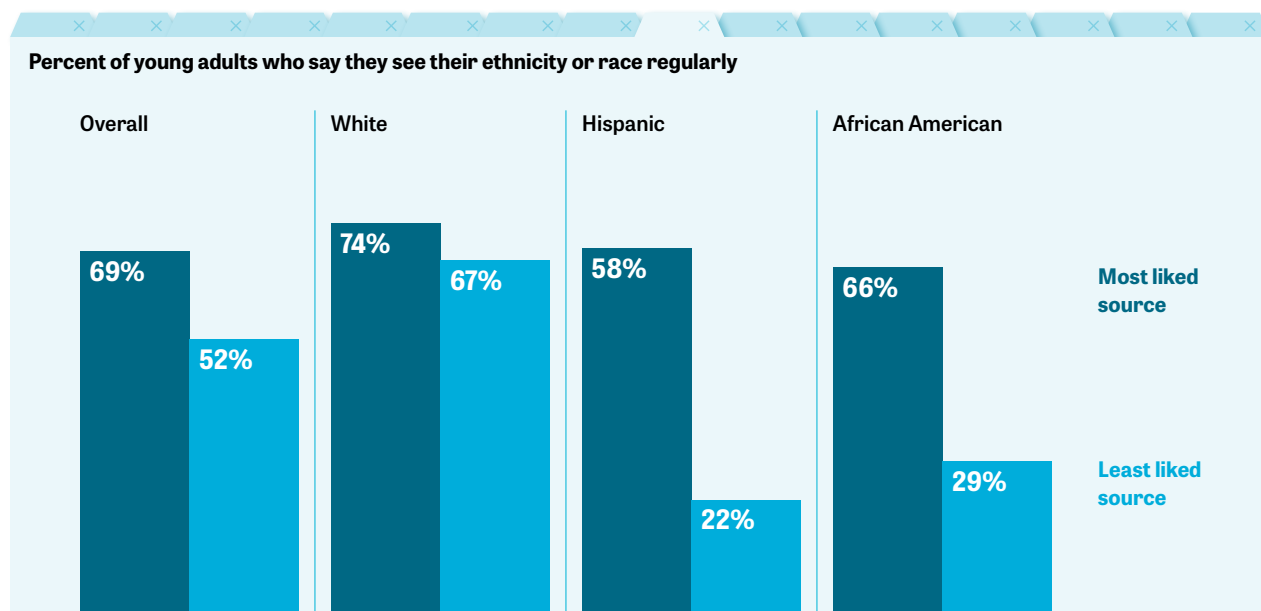
Concerns about Reporting on Race and Ethnicity

YOUNG HISPANIC AND AFRICAN AMERICANS DO NOT BELIEVE THE MEDIA REGULARLY COVERS THEIR RACIAL OR ETHNIC COMMUNITIES, EVEN IN THEIR FAVORITE NEWS SOURCES.

In order to understand young adults' attitudes toward news, the survey asked them to name their most liked and least liked news source and then explored their opinions of these specific sources. When asked about coverage of race and ethnicity in each of these sources, many young adults express concern.

Thirty-one percent of young adults say that people of their race and issues that affect them are never or only occasionally covered in their most liked news source and 47 percent say the same about their least liked source. Hispanics and African Americans are especially likely to say both their most and least liked source fail to regularly cover issues that affect them.

Young Hispanics and African Americans are less likely than whites to see people of their race or ethnicity in news coverage.



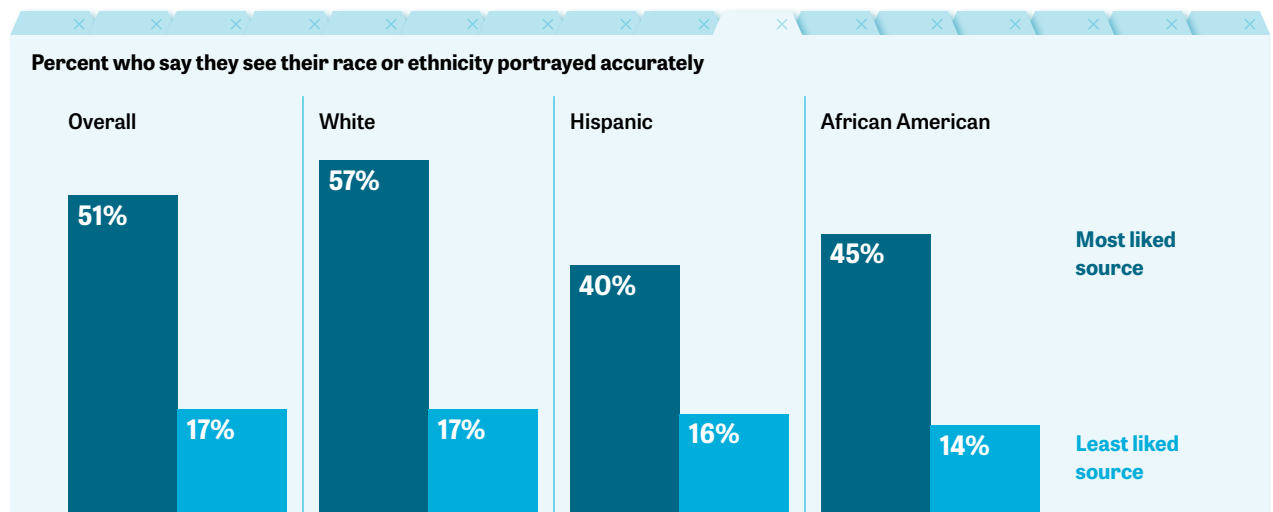
QUESTION How regularly do you think people and issues of your race or ethnicity are covered in your [NAME OF MOST LIKED SOURCE/NAME OF LEAST LIKED SOURCE]?

SOURCE Nationally representative survey of 1,660 adults age 18-34 conducted March 19-April 12, 2018, by NORC at the University of Chicago with funding from Knight Foundation

MANY YOUNG HISPANICS AND AFRICAN AMERICANS DO NOT FEEL LIKE THE NEWS PORTRAYS THEIR RACE OR ETHNICITY ACCURATELY.

When asked about how accurately their most and least liked sources portray their race and ethnicity, young African Americans and Hispanics are critical of both. Only 45 percent of African Americans and 40 percent of Hispanics say their most liked source very accurately portrays them. But their least liked sources fare even worse on this measure; about 6 in 10 in both groups say their least liked source portrays them slightly or not at all accurately.

Young adults are critical of how accurately they are portrayed in both their most and least liked source



QUESTION How accurately do you think the news you watch, read or hear from [NAME OF MOST LIKED SOURCE/NAME OF LEAST LIKED SOURCE] portrays [RESPONDENT'S RACIAL GROUP] people and issues that affect them?

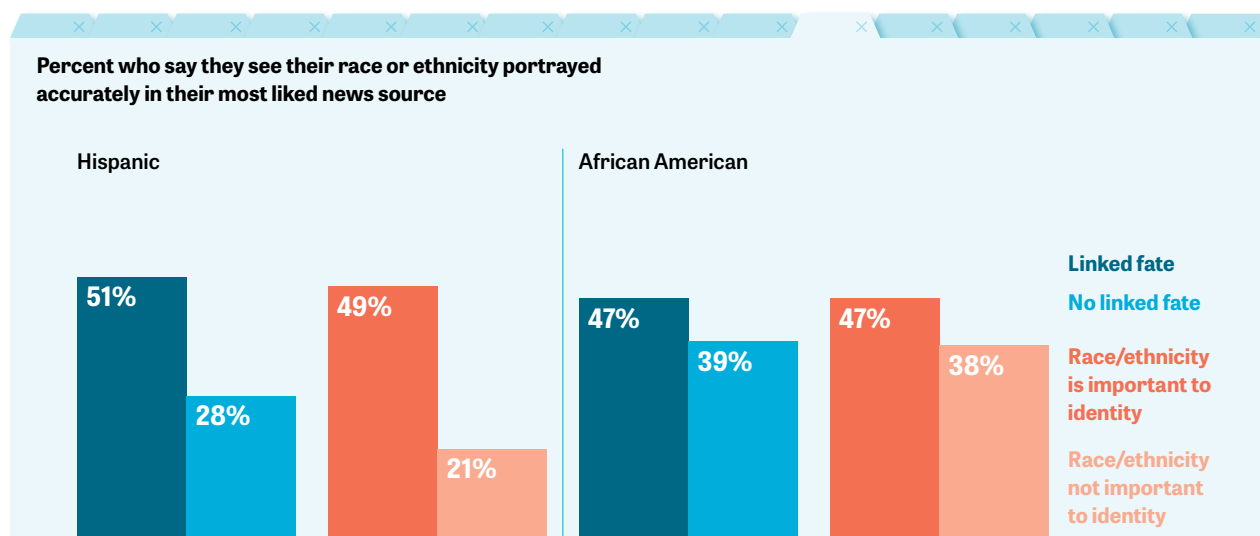
SOURCE Nationally representative survey of 1,660 adults age 18-34 conducted March 19-April 12, 2018, by NORC at the University of Chicago with funding from Knight Foundation

Young Hispanics are more likely to see the media's portrayal of them as accurate when they have a strong sense of linked fate. Hispanic young adults that believe what happens to other Hispanics impacts them (i.e. a sense of linked fate) are more likely to say that their most liked source accurately portrays the people and issues that affect Hispanics (51 percent vs. 28 percent).

In addition, 49 percent of Hispanics that feel being Hispanic is an important or essential part of their identity say that their most liked source accurately portrays Hispanics compared with 21 percent of those who do not have such a strong identity.

However, this impact of racial identity and linked fate does not extend to African Americans.

Linked fate and the importance of race or ethnicity to one's identity have different impacts for young Hispanics and African Americans' perceptions of their favorite news source.



QUESTIONS

How accurately do you think the news you watch, read or hear from [NAME OF MOST LIKED SOURCE] portrays [RESPONDENT'S RACIAL GROUP] people and issues that affect them?

SOURCE Nationally representative survey of 1,660 adults age 18-34 conducted March 19-April 12, 2018, by NORC at the University of Chicago with funding from Knight Foundation

How much is your life affected by what generally happens to each of the following groups in this country? [RESPONDENT'S RACIAL GROUP]

Please think about your own personal identity, that is, the various ways that you define yourself as a person. How important are each of these characteristics to your own personal identity?

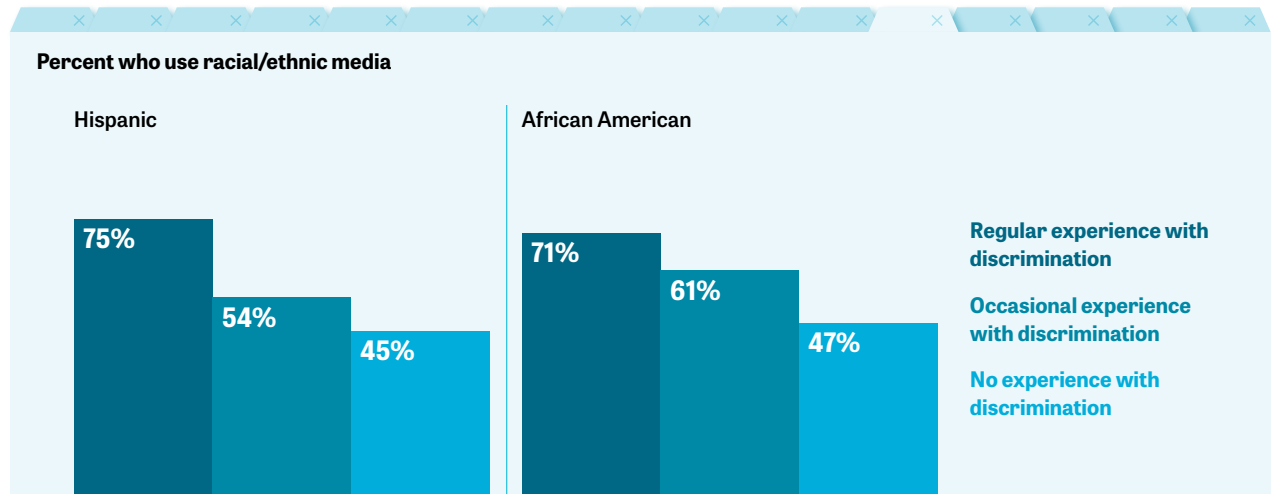
AS YOUNG ADULTS QUESTION THE MEDIA'S COVERAGE OF RACE, MANY HISPANICS AND AFRICAN AMERICANS GET NEWS FROM ETHNIC MEDIA SOURCES.

Young Hispanics and African Americans frequently use sources that focus on providing news specific to a racial or ethnic community. When asked on how regularly they use such ethnic media sources, a majority of African American (58 percent) and Hispanic (52 percent) young adults say that they use these news sources at least once a week, including 26 percent of African Americans and 18 percent of Hispanics who use these news sources at least once a day.

Racial identity is important to those young adults that use such media sources. Young African Americans and Hispanics who feel a sense of linked fate—that is, that what happens to others of their race or ethnicity has an impact on them—are more likely than those who don't to use such racial or ethnic news sources at least once a week (63 percent vs. 43 percent).

Self-reported experience with racial discrimination is another factor in ethnic media consumption. Young African Americans and Hispanics who say they regularly experience racial discrimination are more likely than those who don't regularly experience this to use racial or ethnic media. The findings indicate the experiencing racial discrimination could lead young adults to be more likely to seek out news sources that explore issues from the perspective of their racial or ethnic group.

Young adults who report regular experience with discrimination are more likely to say they use sources that provide news specific to their race or ethnicity.



QUESTIONS

When it comes to getting news about important issues, how often do you use television, print, or online news sources that focus on providing news for the Hispanic/Latino community, such as Univision, Latina, or Telemundo?

When it comes to getting news about important issues, how often do you use television, print, or online sources that focus on providing news for the African American/black community, such as Ebony, Black Twitter, or The Root?

SOURCE Nationally representative survey of 1,660 adults age 18-34 conducted March 19-April 12, 2018, by NORC at the University of Chicago with funding from Knight Foundation.

How Young Adults Use the News

MAJORITIES OF YOUNG ADULTS RELY ON A FAVORED NEWS SOURCE TO MAKE DECISIONS, AND AFRICAN AMERICANS ARE PARTICULARLY LIKELY TO ACT ON NEWS.

Many young adults make decisions about what candidates and policies to support based on news from their favorite sources while few rely on less trusted outlets.

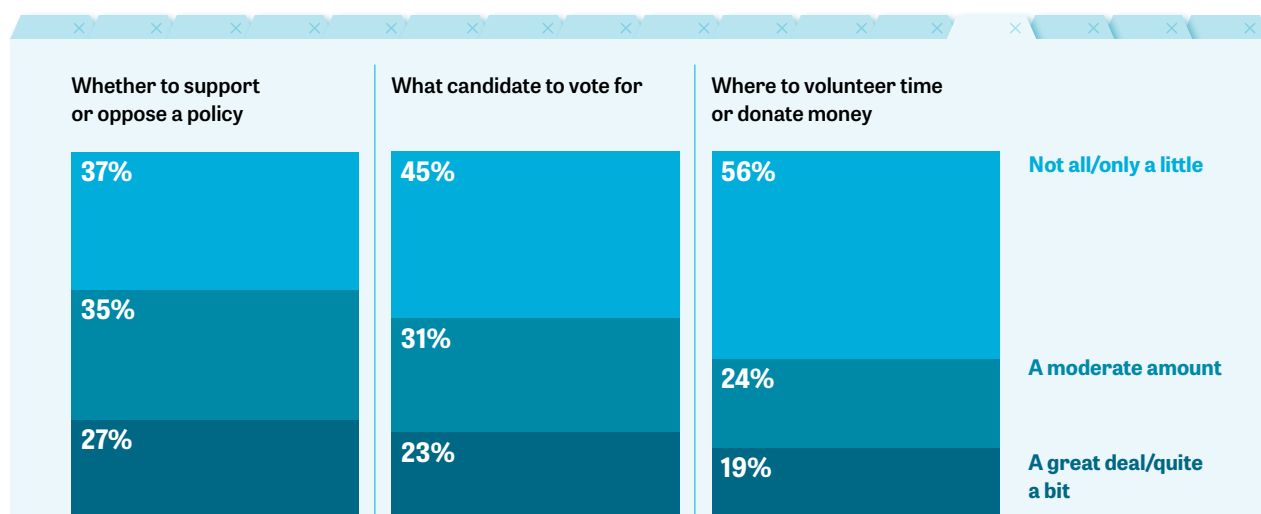
In order to understand how young adults use news, the survey asked young adults to name their most liked and least liked news source and then explored how these specific sources impacted their decision making.

More than 6 in 10 young adults report relying on their most liked source at least a moderate amount when deciding whether to support or oppose a policy, including nearly 3 in 10 who say they rely on it quite a bit or a great deal.

More than half use their favorite news source at least a moderate amount to decide what candidate to vote for. And more than 4 in 10 use their favorite source to determine where to volunteer their time or donate money.

Only about 1 in 10 young adults say they rely on their least liked source when deciding to either vote for a candidate, support a policy, or volunteer their time or donate money.

Many young adults rely on a favorite news source to make decisions about candidates, policies, and donating their time or money.

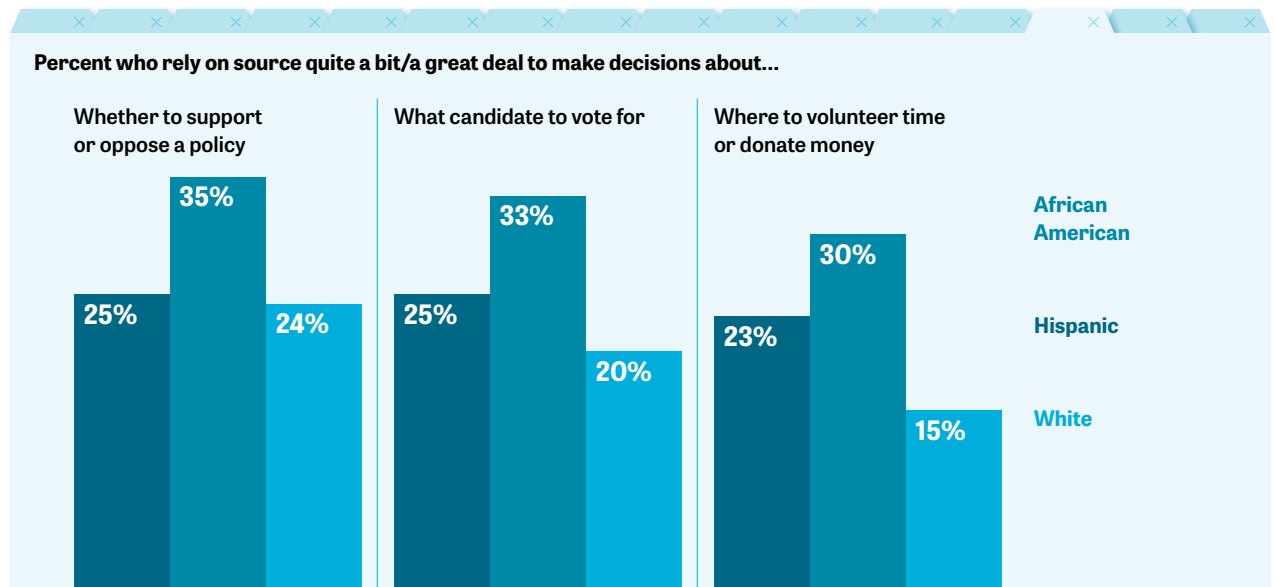


QUESTION When it comes to making decisions about each of the following, how much do you rely on [NAME OF MOST LIKED SOURCE]?

SOURCE Nationally representative survey of 1,660 adults age 18-34 conducted March 19-April 12, 2018, by NORC at the University of Chicago with funding from Knight Foundation

African Americans are more likely than others to rely quite a bit or a great deal on their favorite source to make choices. For example, young African Americans are twice as likely as whites to say their favorite news source influences their decision about how to donate their time or money (30 percent vs. 15 percent). Similarly, 33 percent of young African Americans rely on their most liked news source to decide what candidates to support compared with 25 percent of Hispanics and 20 percent of whites.

Young African Americans are more likely to rely on news to inform their decision making than young adults of other races or ethnicities.



QUESTION When it comes to making decisions about each of the following, how much do you rely on [NAME OF MOST LIKED SOURCE]?

SOURCE Nationally representative survey of 1,660 adults age 18-34 conducted March 19-April 12, 2018, by NORC at the University of Chicago with funding from Knight Foundation

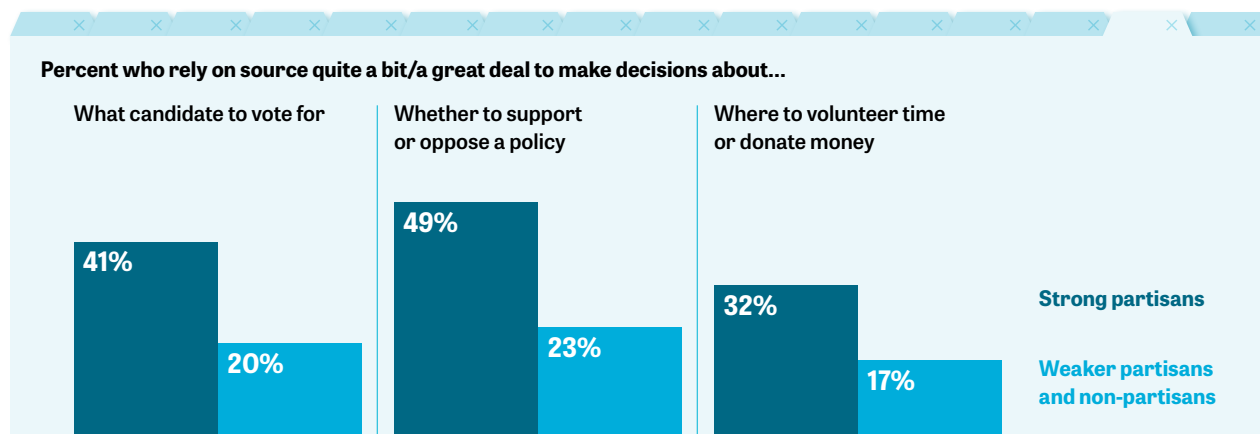
STRONG POLITICAL PARTISANS ARE THE MOST LIKELY TO RELY ON NEWS FOR DECISION MAKING.

Both party identification and identifying as either a strong Democrat or strong Republican are tied to how young adults rely on their news to make decisions. Strong partisans are more likely than independents and those who don't strongly identify with either political party to rely on news sources to choose what policies or candidates to support.

Democrats are the most likely to use their favorite news source quite a bit to decide what policies to support, followed by Republicans then independent (34 percent vs. 23 percent vs. 14 percent). Similarly, 28 percent of Democrats say they rely on their favorite news source to choose what candidates to support compared with only 15 percent of independents (21 percent of Republicans say the same).

Across Democrats and Republicans, those that identify strongly with their party are more likely than those with weaker party identification or non-partisans to rely quite a bit on their favorite source to make decisions about candidates (41 percent vs. 20 percent), policies (49 percent vs. 23 percent), and how to donate their time and money (32 percent vs. 17 percent).

Compared to weaker or non-partisans, strong partisans more often use their favorite news source to inform their civic actions.



QUESTION When it comes to making decisions about each of the following, how much do you rely on [NAME OF MOST LIKED SOURCE]?

SOURCE Nationally representative survey of 1,660 adults age 18-34 conducted March 19-April 12, 2018, by NORC at the University of Chicago with funding from Knight Foundation

THE MORE THAT YOUNG HISPANICS AND WHITES FEEL THEIR FATE IS TIED TO THOSE OF THEIR RACIAL OR ETHNIC GROUP OVERALL, THE MORE THEY RELY ON THE NEWS TO DECIDE WHAT POLICIES TO SUPPORT.

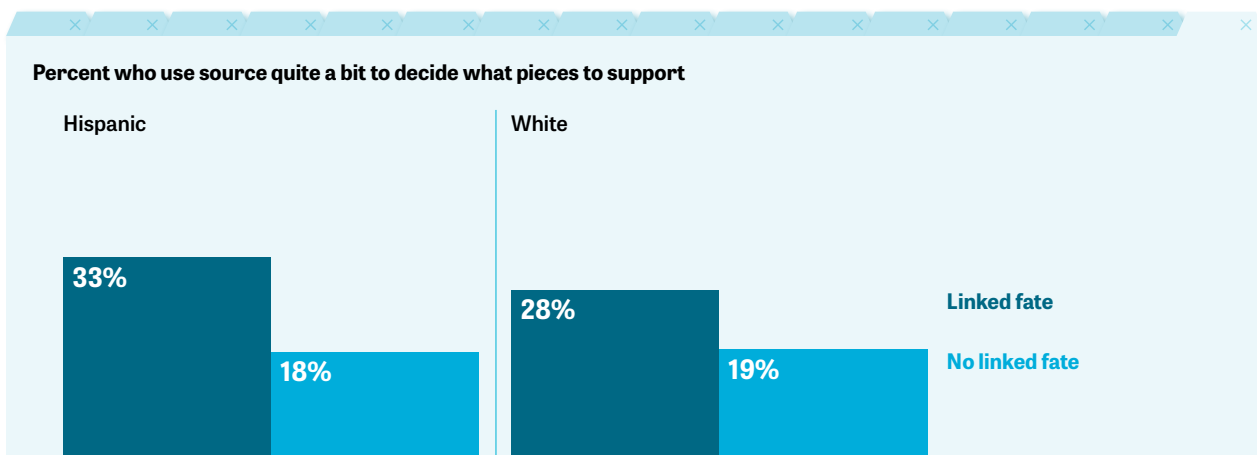
Young adults were asked how much they believe their personal outcomes are linked to the fate of others in their racial or ethnic group. Overall, 53 percent of young adults believe that what happens to their racial group in this country has a big impact on their own life, including 70 percent of African Americans, 51 percent of whites, and 47 percent of Hispanics.

When young Hispanics feel a sense of linked fate, they are more likely than those who don't to use news to make decisions about candidates to vote for (34 percent vs. 15 percent), policies to support (33 percent vs. 18 percent), and where to donate time or money (30 percent vs. 16 percent).

Similarly, 28 percent of young whites who feel their lives are completely or very affected by what happens to their racial group overall report using their favorite news source a good deal or quite a bit to form opinions about what policies to support compared with 19 percent who feel less linked or not at all linked to their race.

Although African Americans are the most likely to report a sense of linked fate, it is not related to their use of news to make decisions when controlling for other demographic factors such as age, income, and education.

Young Hispanics and whites with a sense of linked fate are more likely to use news to make decisions about what policies to support.



QUESTIONS

When it comes to making decisions about each of the following, how much do you rely on [NAME OF MOST LIKED SOURCE]?

How much is your life affected by what generally happens to each of the following groups in this country? [RESPONDENT'S RACIAL GROUP]

SOURCE Nationally representative survey of 1,660 adults age 18-34 conducted March 19-April 12, 2018, by NORC at the University of Chicago with funding from Knight Foundation

John S. and James L. Knight Foundation

200 South Biscayne Boulevard

Suite 3300

Miami, FL 33131-2349

(305) 908-2600

knightfoundation.org



**KNIGHT
FOUNDATION**