

Mobile news surges, newspapers fall further: US poll

WASHINGTON: Americans are increasingly turning to their mobile devices for news, with print newspapers losing more ground, a poll showed Thursday.



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The Pew Research Center survey found an acceleration in the use of mobile devices for news over the past three years, as fewer Americans relied on newspapers. Television meanwhile held steady as a source of news, including local, network and cable.

The portion of Americans who get at least some news on a mobile device rose to 72% in 2016 from 54% in 2013, Pew said. That included 36% who said they "often" get news from a smartphone or tablet.

The survey confirmed the trend toward digital and mobile while offering a grim outlook for the newspaper sector, which is failing to connect with young adults. Just 20% of adults said they often got news from print newspapers, compared with 27% three years earlier.

Overall, eight in 10 respondents said they got at least some information from newspapers, little changed from the previous survey. But the demographics for newspaper readership were especially challenging: just 5% in the 18-29 age group said they often read newspapers, compared with 48% in the over-65 age group.

The findings for young adults are "very stark" when it pertains to "holding a print edition," said Pew researcher Jeffrey Gottfried, but less dramatic when it comes to getting news from many of those same organizations online.

"Younger people are getting news online at even higher rates than older Americans," he said.

News still is important to Americans: More than seven in 10 follow local and national news closely, and 65% monitor international news with the same regularity. Fully 81% of Americans get at least some of this news through websites, apps or social networking sites, with the mobile share growing.

Television remains a major source of information, with 57% of adults often getting TV-based news. The survey found little change in reliance on local and national TV news broadcasts, and an increase in the percentage watching cable news.

"Americans do have a preference for getting news on a screen, but it is television that still dominates," Gottfried said.

Even as digital news gains, readers are slow to trust much of the information they see online, Pew found. Just four percent of online adults said they had a lot of confidence in news they see on social media, for example, according to the survey.

"Digital news is still in its adolescence," Gottfried said.

"The public is still cautious about getting news online."

Americans see the media as performing its watchdog function, but most see bias: 74% said news organisations tend to favour one side, the survey found. Social media such as Facebook and Twitter have grown as a source of news in recent years. Pew found that 26% in the survey often click on links to news stories on social media.

But those who seek the news out online behave differently than those who stumble on the news while browsing Facebook. Among these "news seekers," 63% follow news all or most of the time, compared with 43% of non-seekers.

The Pew report was based on a two-part study: The first queried 4,654 US adults from 12 January to 8 February and the second used 14 short online surveys administered in February and March in which a total of 2,078 participated.

The margin of error for the full sample was estimated at 2.4 percentage points.

Source: Sapa-AFP

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