

AEI Political Report

A MONTHLY POLL COMPILATION

Disillusioned, Distrustful, and Dissatisfied: A Public Opinion Portrait

In a January 2013 release, the Gallup Organization reported that the “dissatisfaction with government” response on its “most important problem” question was “as high as it has been since the Watergate days of 1974.” In its March preliminary report, the University of Michigan and Thomson Reuters reported: “Never before in the long history of the survey have so many consumers spontaneously mentioned that disarray in federal economic policy [as] the main problem facing the economy.” These sentiments and long-standing concerns about the economy appear to be taking toll on President Obama, and several recent polls have shown a dip in his approval rating. Congress’s ratings, already historically low, haven’t budged. The ratings for the Democratic and Republican parties continue to bump along at very low levels.

Q: *What do you think is . . . ?*

Most important problem facing the country today

(Top five responses shown)

Economy	24%
Dissatisfaction with government	20
Unemployment	16
Federal budget deficit	13
Health care	7

Source: Gallup, March 2013.

Q: *How much of the time do you think you can . . . ?*

Trust the federal government in Washington to do what is right

Just about always	3%
Most of the time	23
Only some of the time	67
Never (vol.)	6

Source: Pew Research Center, January 2013.

Q: *Do you . . . ?*

Approve of the way Congress is handling its job

National response	 13%
Response of Republicans	 15%
Independents	 11
Democrats	 13

Source: Gallup, March 2013.

Q: *Do you . . . ?*

Democrats in Congress Republicans in Congress

Approve of the way they are handling their job	32%	20%
Disapprove	60	71

Note: An ABC News/Washington Post poll taken at about the same time showed that 34 percent approved of the way the Democrats were handling their job and 24 percent the Republicans. Source: Quinnipiac, February–March 2013.

Q: *Thinking about some specific aspects of the nation’s economy . . . Please tell me if you are . . . ?*

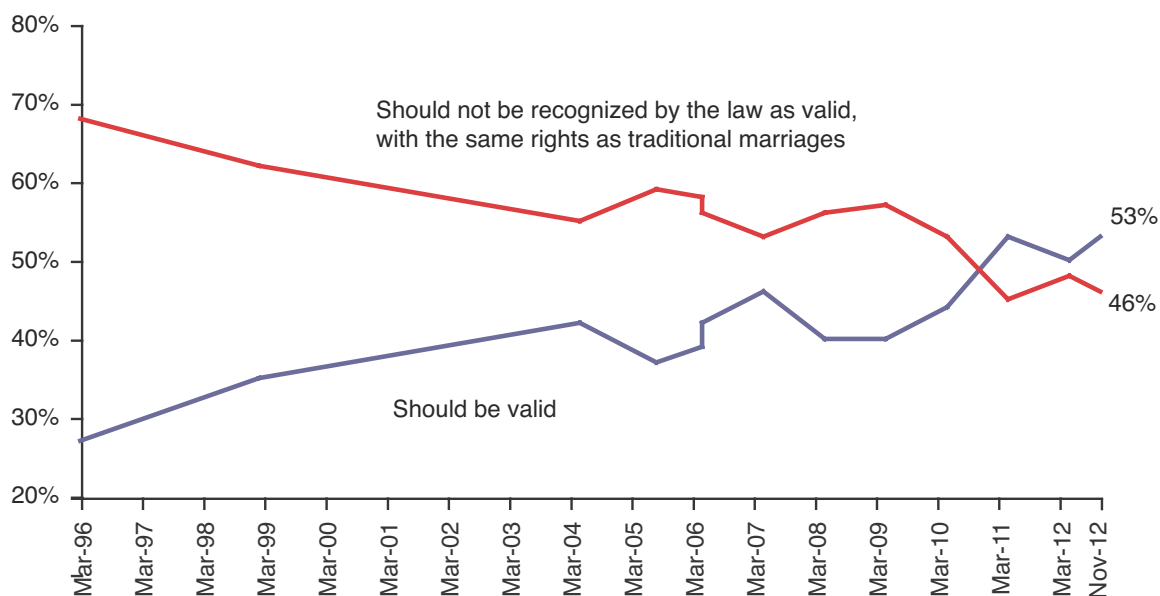
	Gas prices	The job situation	Food, consumer prices	Real estate values
Hearing mostly bad news	74%	45%	52%	23%
A mix of good and bad	20	40	40	46
Mostly good news	4	15	6	24

Note: Twenty-nine percent said they had been hearing mostly bad news about financial markets, 43 percent a mix of good and bad, and 23 percent mostly good. The responses for the economy were 33, 50, and 7 percent, respectively. Source: Pew Research Center, March 2013.

Gay Marriage Gains Ground

Americans' attitudes towards homosexuality and gay marriage have undergone significant changes since the subjects were first discussed by pollsters. In Gallup's poll, a majority of 53 percent think marriage between same-sex couples should be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages. The change in attitudes could be related to the fact that 65 percent now report that they personally know or work with someone who is gay or lesbian. In 1992, 22 percent told *Newsweek* interviewers that they had a friend or close acquaintance who was gay. A plurality of Americans would prefer that individual states decide the issue, as opposed to constitutional amendments either permitting or prohibiting gay marriage.

Q: Do you think marriages between same-sex couples . . . ?



Note: Two more recent polls also show gay marriage achieving majority support. The mid-March ABC/*Washington Post* poll found 58 percent saying "it should be legal for gay and lesbian couples to get married." Thirty-six percent disagreed. A mid-March CNN/Opinion Research Corporation poll found 53 percent agreeing that "marriages between gay and lesbian couples should or should not be recognized by the law as valid, with the same rights as traditional marriages. Forty-four percent in the poll disagreed. Source: Gallup/*USA Today*, latest that of November 2012.

Q: Do you . . . ?

Personally know or work with someone who is gay or lesbian	65%
Do not	33

Source: NBC/*Wall Street Journal*, December 2012.

Q: In your view . . . ?

Being gay or lesbian is something a person is born with	45%
Homosexuality is due to factors such as upbringing and environment	36
Both (vol.)	10

Source: Gallup, November 2012.

Q: Laws relating to marriage have traditionally been handled by individual states, not the federal government. But some believe Washington should set uniform national laws about whether marriages between individuals of the same gender should be recognized. Would you prefer Congress . . . ?

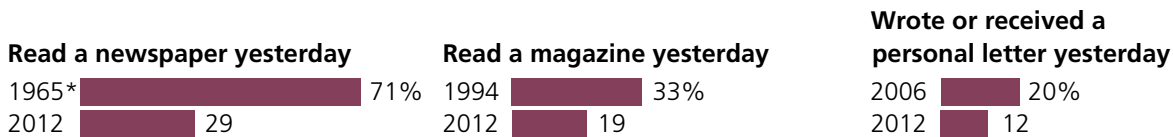
Pass a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage in every state regardless of state law	24%
Pass a constitutional amendment to permit same-sex marriage in every state regardless of state law	27
Take no action and let each state decide whether to permit or ban same-sex marriage	42

Source: United Technologies/*National Journal* Congressional Connection Poll, May 2012.

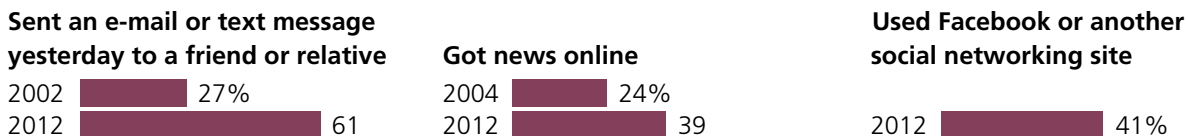
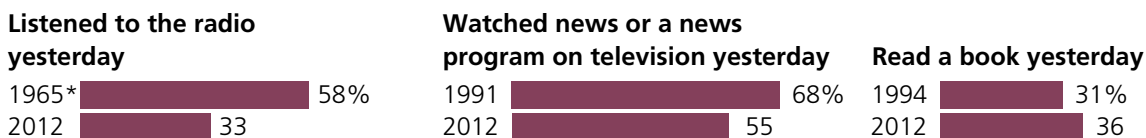
Media Matters: Getting News

People still consume as much news as ever, but the ways they are doing it have changed dramatically in recent years. For almost two decades, the Pew Research Center has tracked patterns in the public's news consumption. Below, we explore a question that asks what people did yesterday. Most print activity such as reading a newspaper, magazine, or sending or receiving a personal letter is down. However, those who said that they read a book yesterday is up five points since 1994.

Q: Now thinking about yesterday, did you get a chance to . . . ?



Note: Only 23 percent read a *print* newspaper and only 17 percent read a *print* magazine yesterday.



Note: *Question asked by Gallup.

Source: Pew Research Center, latest that of May–June 2012.

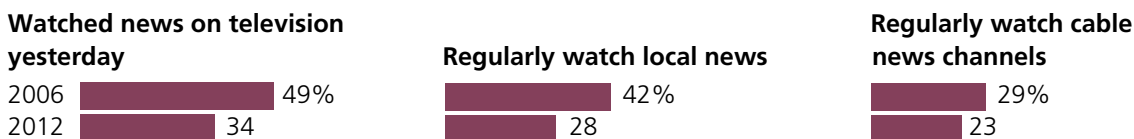
Go-to News Sources

The decline in traditional news media consumption is being led by the young, while audiences in the oldest demographic group in Pew's surveys are stable or increasing. As the data on the next page shows, a lot of young people are going newsless. Twenty-nine percent of young people under age 25 got no news yesterday from traditional or digital news platforms, including cell phones and social networks. Thirty-three percent of this age group gave that response in 2010.

Q: Now thinking about yesterday, did you get a chance to . . . ?

Q: Do you happen to . . . regularly, or not?

18-to-29 year olds



65 years and older



Source: Pew Research Center, latest that of May–June 2012.

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The newsless and less news

Got no news yesterday from traditional or digital news platforms

National	17%
18–24	29

Average minutes with the news yesterday

National	67 minutes
18–29	45 minutes

Source: Pew Research Center, latest that of May–June 2012.

The young demo

18–29 year olds are 23 percent of the public.

They make up:

43% of the audience for The Colbert Report

39% of the audience for The Daily Show

32% of the audience for the *New York Times*

Source: Pew Research Center, latest that of May–June 2012.

The Rise of Digital

Consumption of news through traditional outlets, such as network news, is declining. But digital news is on the rise. In 1996, only 2 percent of Americans regularly received their news online. Now, 46 percent do. Search engines and social networks constitute large sources of news as well. Blogs remain an outlet for a small minority. Around 12 percent say they regularly use them.

Q: Do you happen to . . . regularly, or not?

Regularly watch network evening news



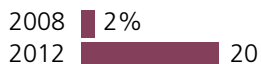
Regularly go online for news



Regularly use search engines for news



See news regularly on Facebook or other SNS



Regularly read blogs about politics and current events



Note: In this Pew question, “regularly” means three times or more days per week.

Source: Pew Research Center, latest that of May–June 2012.

Q: Where did you get your news yesterday?

Online news sources used most often

Yahoo/Yahoo News	26%
Google/Google News	17
CNN	14
Local news	13
MSN	11
Fox	9
MSNBC	6

Note: Only news sources above 5 percent shown.

Source: Pew Research Center, May–June 2012.

Social News

News consumption remains a popular activity on Twitter, although only a small percentage of Americans use the site. Other social networks hold more users, and are therefore a larger source of news.

Q: How often . . . ?

Ever see news on . . .

Social networking sites such as	
Facebook, Google Plus	47%
Twitter	11

Twitter users who . . .

Ever see news on Twitter	83%
Ever tweet, retweet news	59
Follow news organizations, journalists	36
Saw news headlines on Twitter yesterday	26

Source: Pew Research Center, May–June 2012.

The Reach of Digital Media

Young people consume more news through social media than any other age group. But 40 to 49 year olds are the most likely to consume news online or digitally. Nearly a quarter of those ages 65 and older get their news online or digitally.

Q: *Where did you get your news yesterday?*

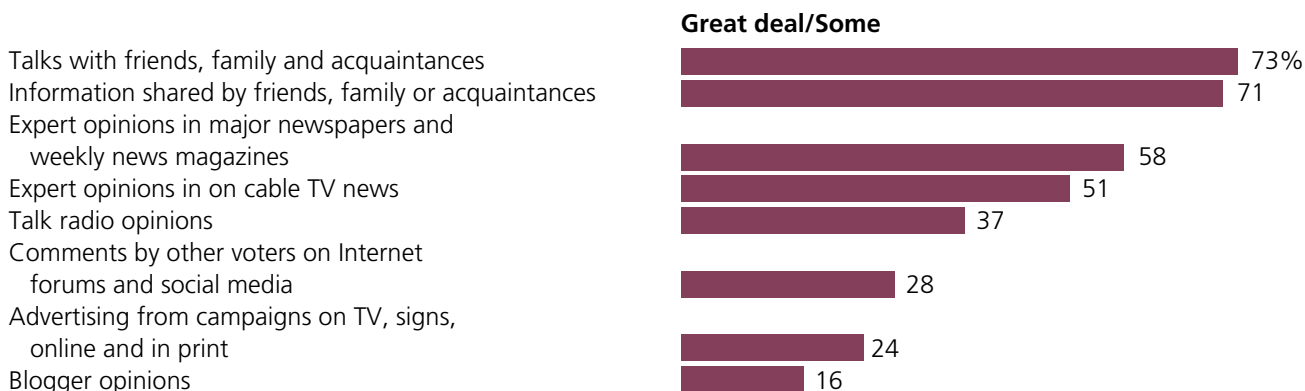
	Some digital/ Online	Email	Social networking	Digital/ Online only
18–29	41%	13%	34%	28%
30–39	47	21	30	13
40–49	49	17	23	13
50–64	35	15	10	6
65+	23	12	2	3

Source: Pew Research Center, May–June 2012.

Influence

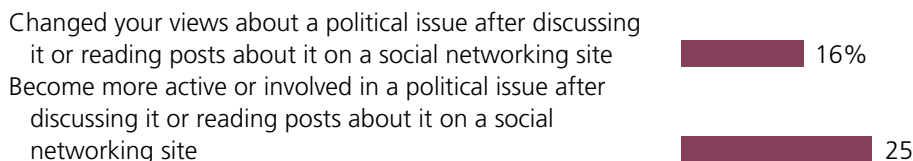
Person-to-person contact remains the most influential source in determining Americans' vote for president. However, digital sharing of information between friends, family, or acquaintances also has an impact. Online comments and blogger opinions don't hold much sway.

Q: *How much do you consider the following in deciding whom to vote for in the November presidential election?*



Source: *National Journal* Heartland Monitor, June 2012.

Q: *Thinking about how using social networks might affect your political views overall . . . have you, personally, ever . . . ?*



Note: Asked of internet users.

Source: Pew Research Center, May–June 2012.

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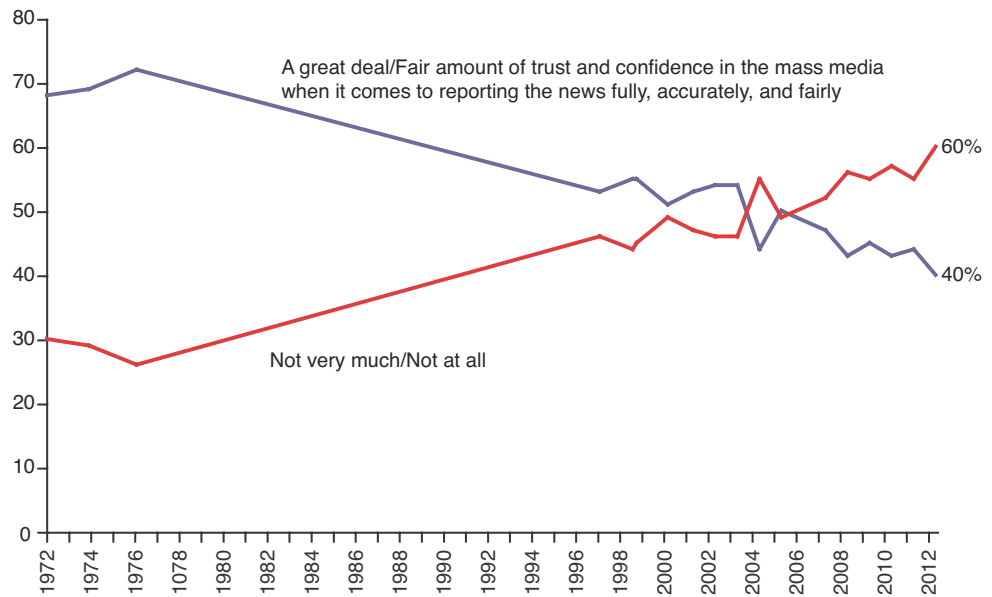
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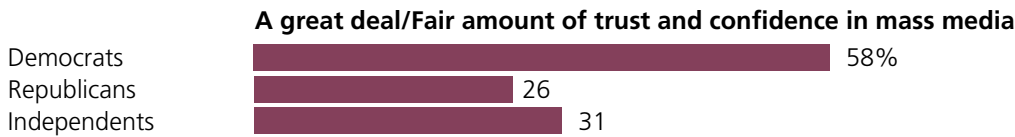
Trust but Verify

Trust and confidence in most central institutions are down. This includes the mass media. Almost 70 percent had a great deal or a fair amount of trust in the mass media when it comes to reporting the news “fully, accurately, and fairly” in the early 1970s. Today, only 40 percent say they have that level of confidence.



Q: In general, how much . . . ?

2012 responses by party:

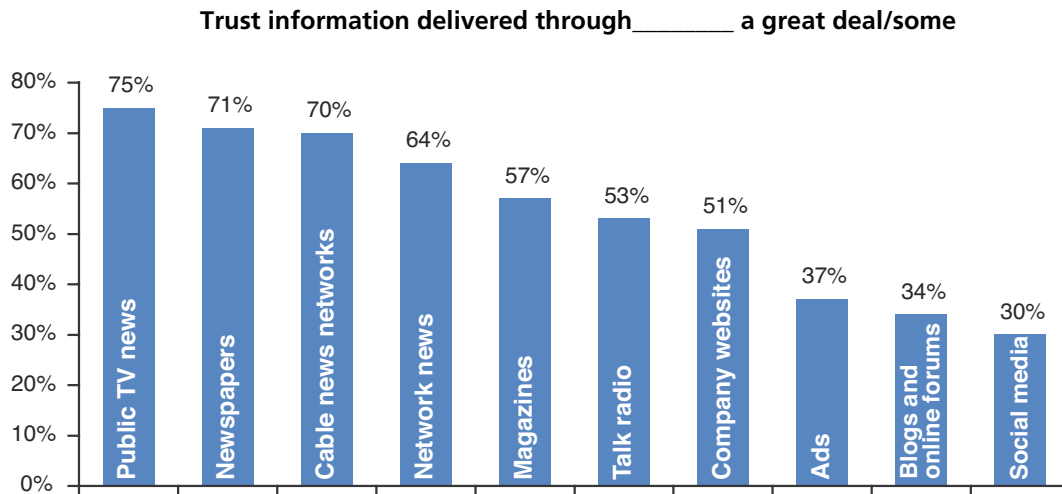


Source: Gallup, September 2012.

Trust in Information

While Americans are consuming news from traditional news sources less and less, they seem to trust traditional media much more than digital sources.

Q: How much do you trust information delivered through the following media?



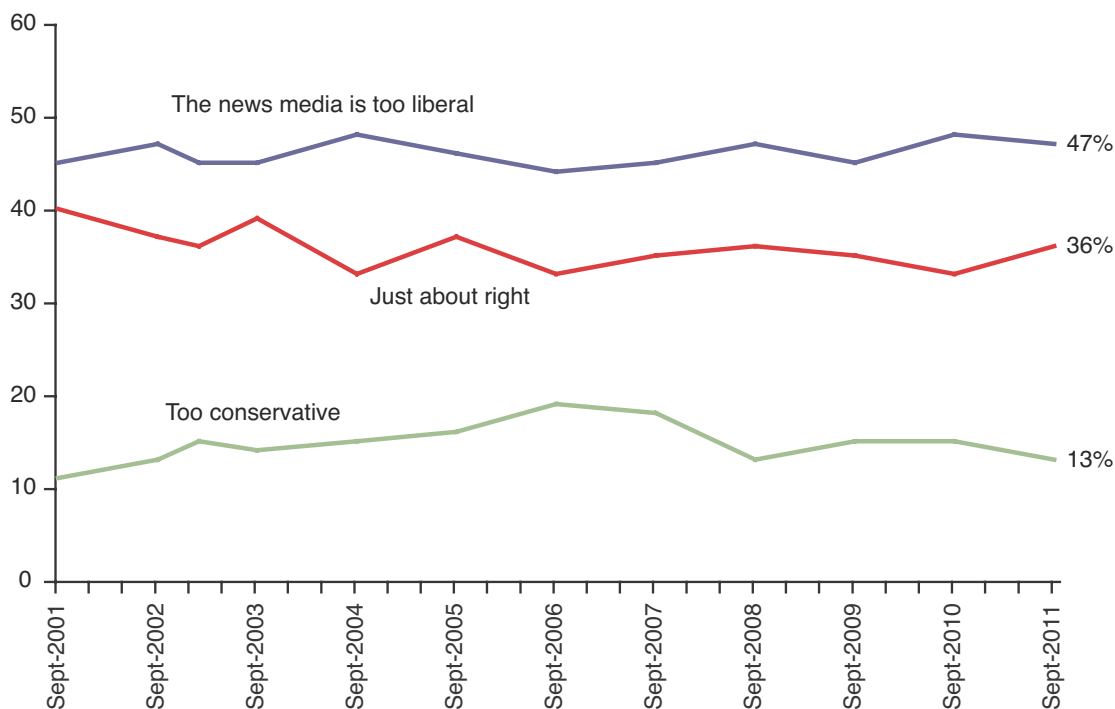
Source: National Journal Heartland Monitor, June 2012.

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The Bias Problem

Perceptions of media bias have been stable in the past decade, with nearly half in 2011 saying the news media is too liberal. Interestingly, equal proportions of Democrats say the media is too liberal as believe it is too conservative.

Q: In general, do you think . . . ?



2011 responses by party

	Too liberal	Just about right	Too conservative
Democrats	20%	57%	20%
Independents	50	32	13
Republicans	75	20	4

Source: Gallup, latest that of September 2011.

Q: Do you think . . . ?

Media coverage of Washington and the White House is focusing more on serious issues of great importance for the country's future

29%

On silly issues of little importance to the country's future

62

Source: Fox News, February 2013.

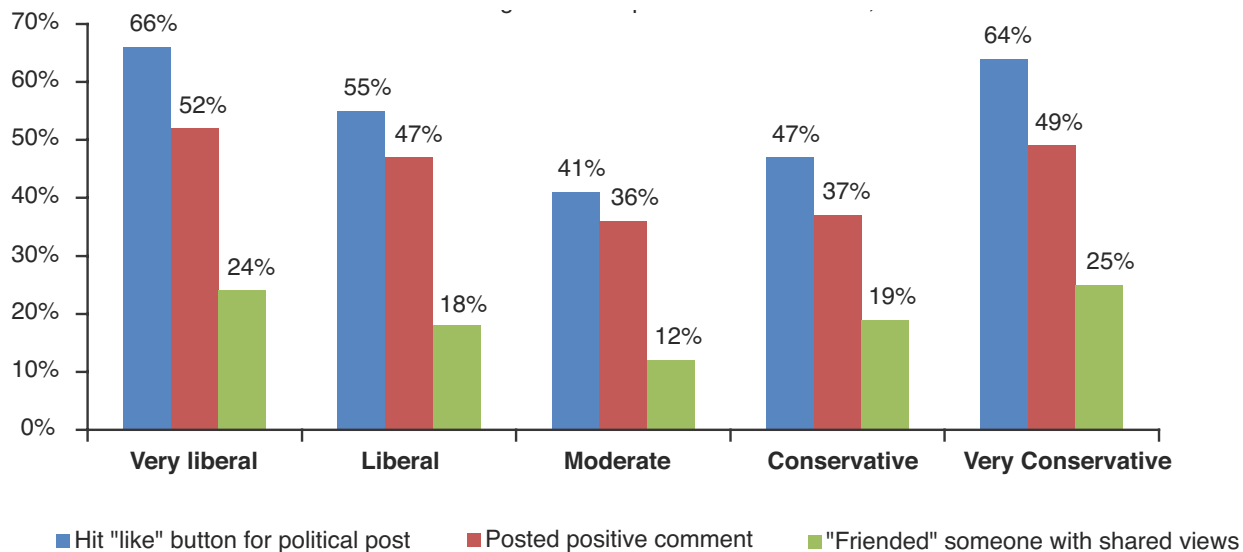
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Audience Behavior

Social network users probably aren't too surprised to learn that those on the extremes of the political spectrum are the most likely to respond to politically themed posts. On the other hand, the audiences of popular political sites are more diverse than their content would indicate. Self-identified Republicans constitute almost a fifth of the left-leaning political news site Talking Points Memo, while Democrats make up a similar portion of the right-leaning Drudge Report audience. Maybe people are curious about what the other side is saying.

How social networking users respond to political posts, 2012



Source: Pew Research Center, March 2012.

Political Affiliation of Selected Political Site Audiences

	Democrat	Independent	Republican
Talking Points Memo	43%	38%	19%
HuffPost Politics	38	34	27
DailyKos.com	36	46	18
Politico	29	42	29
DailyCaller.com	27	38	35
Newsmax.com	25	37	38
Breitbart.com	24	39	37
DrudgeReport.com	22	37	41

Source: comScore, February 2012.

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Politicians Versus Celebrities on Twitter

President Obama is by far the most popular politician on Twitter, with around 26 million followers at last count. He ranks fifth among top Twitter users by number of followers. But after that, you have to go pretty far down the list before you reach John McCain, who is the 618th most followed user on Twitter.

Top Twitter Users

Justin Bieber	36,200,544	Followers
Lady Gaga	35,158,014	
Katy Perry	33,740,732	
Rihanna	28,844,261	
Barack Obama	28,490,739	
Taylor Swift	25,124,392	
YouTube	24,953,839	
Britney Spears	24,829,251	
Shakira	20,050,771	
Ellen DeGeneres	17,672,216	

Top Politicians on Twitter

Barack Obama	28,490,739	Ranked fifth overall
John McCain	1,796,464	Ranked 679th
Cory Booker	1,372,577	Ranked 993rd
Gavin Newsom	1,253,355	Ranked 1,058th
Jerry Brown	1,054,957	Ranked 1,262nd
Paul Ryan	527,137	Ranked 2,564th
Mike Bloomberg	461,604	Ranked 2,943rd
Joe Biden	433,096	Ranked 3,173rd
Marco Rubio	356,695	Ranked 3,935th
John Boehner	349,259	Ranked 4,499th
Nancy Pelosi	314,045	Ranked 4,530th

Note: Includes only currently serving politicians.
Source: Twitaholic.com

Poll Potpourri

Q: *Have you ever . . . ?*

	Men	Women
Read your significant other's email	16%	19%

Q: *Which would you rather lose . . . ?*

Your smartphone	74%
Your wallet	20%

Q: *How many . . . ?*

1 to 7 pairs of underwear is a normal amount for the average person to own	11%
8 to 15	60
16 to 30	17
30 to 60	5
365	3

Source: CBS News/60 Minutes/*Vanity Fair*, latest that of January 2013.

