

# Americans who Rely on Content Creators or Influencers for News are Active Consumers who Value the Role of Journalism in Society

Many of the Most Active US News Consumers Rely on Professional Journalists Alongside Content Creators and Influencers

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**RECOMMENDED CITATION:**

Mitchell, A., Wright, E., Barchas-Lichtenstein, J., Jens, S. & Beed, N., March 2025, "Americans who Rely on Content Creators or Influencers for News are Active Consumers." Center for News, Technology & Innovation

# Overview

When you think about the people who produce news and journalism, what comes to mind? Perhaps a reporter with a mic and camera crew, the byline on a story from your favorite news organization, an anchor on a TV set. Turns out, this image is just one among an increasing number of possibilities.

According to a recent Center for News, Technology & Innovation (CNTI) survey of 1,025 U.S. adults conducted September 12-21, 2024,<sup>1</sup> close to a quarter (22%) of U.S. adults get news and information online from individual creators or influencers regularly and about half (52%) do so at least occasionally. This report focuses primarily on the 22% who do so regularly and the ways they stand apart from — and in line with — other Americans. As with all CNTI research, this report was prepared by the research and professional staff of CNTI.

## About one-in-five Americans regularly get news and information from content creators or influencers

**Question:** How often, if at all, do you get news and information online from individual content creators or influencers?



*Note: Survey of U.S. adults (N = 1,025) conducted September 12-21, 2024. Refused/NA responses not shown.*

*Chart: Center for News, Technology & Innovation • Source: Regular Consumers of Influencer Content • Created with Datawrapper*

U.S. adults who regularly get news and information from influencers or content creators are as, if not more, dedicated to staying informed as other Americans. In fact, they turn to organizations more than to individuals and recognize journalism as something distinct from news. Indeed, Americans who regularly get news and information online from influencers and content creators are highly engaged news consumers who — [like the rest of Americans](#) — turn to a wide range of places and people for news. Unlike other Americans, they do not prioritize getting news from professional journalists above getting informed quickly.

They tend to be more technologically active than other Americans and have a more optimistic outlook on the future of the internet. They are also more optimistic about the potential impacts of AI on both their own ability to keep informed and journalists' ability to report.

<sup>1</sup> The question, “How often, if at all, do you get news and information online from individual content creators or influencers?” was only asked if the respondent was based in the U.S.

Other than age, there are no significant demographic differences between those who regularly consume news and information from individual content creators or influencers and other Americans. Younger people are somewhat more likely to regularly or occasionally get information from influencers or content creators, but the age differences are small. Educational backgrounds and politics are largely the same among all groups.

### **Why we did this study**

News organizations are showing signs of [recognizing influencers and content creators as their colleagues](#). In the U.S. specifically, they were [invited in to cover the Democratic National Convention](#) this past summer and the new Trump administration has actively encouraged “podcasters and social media influencers” to [apply for press credentials](#) to cover the White House. Moreover, coverage of current conflicts — including those in [Gaza](#) and [Ukraine](#) — includes on-scene videos and updates shared by eye-witness content creators. Influencers are improving gaps in access to information in places where professional journalists are being [targeted](#) in the conflict or facing [legal restrictions](#) on reporting from war zones.

As the role of influencers and content creators in the information ecosystem expands, it is important to better understand how they view their role and how they fit into the public’s broader news habits. This study examines the latter among U.S. adults. CNTI is pleased to add to the expanding research in this area, including recent work from the [Reuters Institute](#) and [Pew Research Center](#).

### **How we did this study**

In partnership with [Langer Research Associates](#), CNTI collected data from a probability sample in the United States (N = 1,025) as part of a larger [four-country survey](#). The sample was weighted using demographic variables (age, sex, education and macroregion).

The question, “How often, if at all, do you get news and information online from individual content creators or influencers?” was only asked of the U.S. sample. For this piece, we segmented the U.S. sample by their responses (never, rarely, occasionally or regularly).

More details are available in “About this study” and full questions and results are available in the [crosstabs](#).

## U.S. adults who regularly get news and information from content creators or influencers...

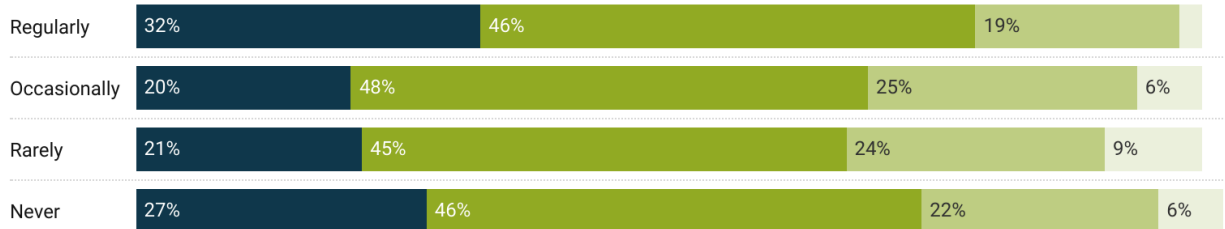
...are actively engaged in issues and events, and more positive than other Americans about their ability to keep up

### Those who regularly get news from influencers keep up with issues and events as much or more than other Americans

**Question:** How closely do you keep informed about issues and events of the day?

Very closely
  Somewhat closely
  Not so closely
  Not closely at all

**Among those who get news from influencers...**



*Creator/influencer question: "How often, if at all, do you get news and information online from individual content creators or influencers?"*

*Note: Survey of U.S. adults (N = 1,025) conducted September 12-21, 2024. Refused/NA responses not shown.*

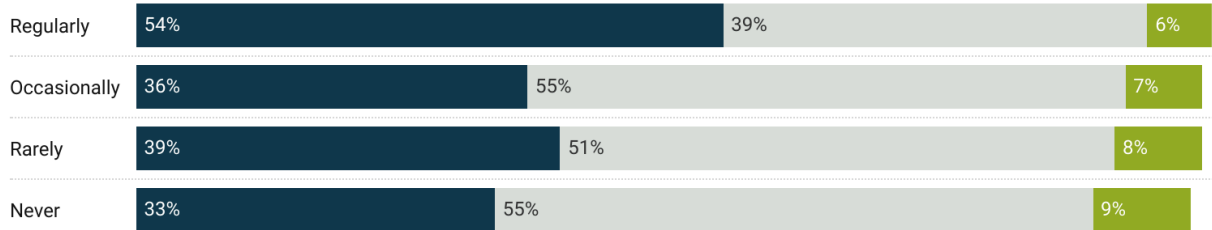
Chart: Center for News, Technology & Innovation • Source: Americans who Rely on Content Creators or Influencers • Created with Datawrapper

## Regular consumers of influencer content are more positive about their ability to keep informed

**Question:** All in all, how do you feel about your ability to keep informed about issues and events?

■ Positive ■ Neutral ■ Negative

**Among those who get news from influencers...**



*Creator/influencer question: "How often, if at all, do you get news and information online from individual content creators or influencers?"*

*Note: Survey of U.S. adults (N = 1,025) conducted September 12-21, 2024. Refused/NA responses not shown.*

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- Those who regularly get news and information from content creators or influencers are more positive than others about their own ability to keep informed. About half (54%) feel positive about this ability, outpacing the 33-39% of other groups.

## ...like other Americans, value the role of journalism in society, while also believing non-journalists can create it

### Those who regularly consume influencer content value news organizations that employ reporters at similar levels as others

**Question:** Do you think news organizations that employ reporters are a critical part of an informed society, or are not a critical part of an informed society?

■ News organizations that employ reporters are a critical part of an informed society

Among those who get news from influencers...



Creator/influencer question: "How often, if at all, do you get news and information online from individual content creators or influencers?"

Note: Survey of U.S. adults (N = 1,025) conducted September 12-21, 2024. News organizations that employ reporters are not a critical part of an informed society and Refused/NA responses not shown.

Chart: Center for News, Technology & Innovation • Source: Americans who Rely on Content Creators or Influencers • Created with Datawrapper

### Majorities across all groups view journalism and news as different

**Question:** Thinking about news and journalism, do you see journalism as something that is different from news, or not?

■ Yes, journalism and news are different

Among those who get news from influencers...



Creator/influencer question: "How often, if at all, do you get news and information online from individual content creators or influencers?"

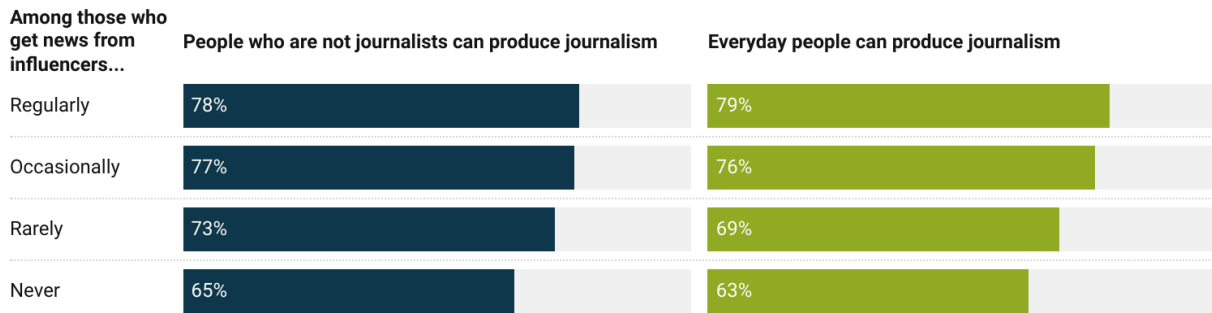
Note: Survey of U.S. adults (N = 1,025) conducted September 12-21, 2024. No, journalism and news are not different and Refused/NA responses not shown.

Chart: Center for News, Technology & Innovation • Source: Americans who Rely on Content Creators or Influencers • Created with Datawrapper

- Strong majorities of all Americans see “news organizations that employ reporters” as critical for an informed society, ranging from 73% to 85%.
- While the plurality of all four groups keep informed about issues and events somewhat closely, 32% of those who regularly get news and information from content creators or influencers say they keep up very closely. That is comparable to those who never get news or information this way (27%) and more than those who occasionally or rarely do (20-21%).

## Most believe that people who are not journalists and "everyday people" can produce journalism, though those who never consume influencer content are least likely to agree

Respondents were asked if they agreed with the following statements at different points in the survey.



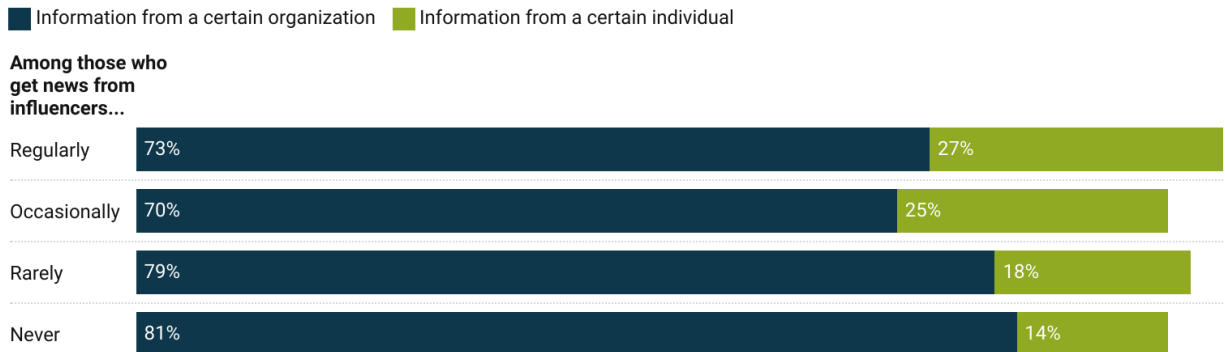
Creator/influencer question: “How often, if at all, do you get news and information online from individual content creators or influencers?”

Note: Survey of U.S. adults (N = 1,025) conducted September 12-21, 2024. Refused/NA responses not shown.

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## Strong majorities of all groups turn to organizations for information, though larger minorities of influencer consumers turn to individuals

**Question:** When looking to get informed about issues and events, which do you look for more?



*Creator/influencer question: "How often, if at all, do you get news and information online from individual content creators or influencers?"*

*Note: Survey of U.S. adults (N = 1,025) conducted September 12-21, 2024. Refused/NA responses not shown.*

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- Among those who regularly consume information and news from influencers or content creators, about three-quarters say that “people who are not journalists” as well as “everyday people” can produce journalism. Majorities of all Americans share these views, although they are slimmer majorities among those who never consume news and information this way. About two-thirds of those who regularly consume news and information this way view “journalism” and “news” as different, as do comparable numbers of all groups.
- People who regularly or occasionally get news and information from influencers or content creators are more likely to say they look for information from individuals compared with those who rarely or never do, but at least two-thirds of all groups turn first to organizations.



## ...prioritize speed in getting informed comparably to hearing from professional journalists; all others say hearing from professional journalists is more important

### Most people prioritize getting news from professional journalists over getting it quickly – except for regular consumers of influencer content

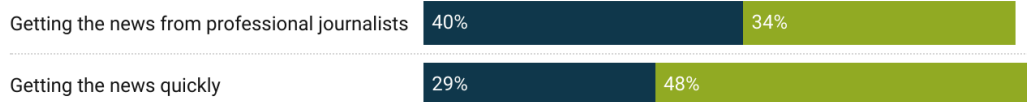
**Question:** How important is each of these in how you choose to get informed?

Very important    Somewhat important

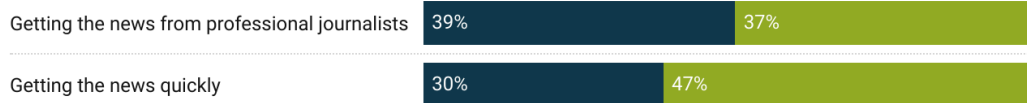
#### Among those who REGULARLY get influencer content



#### Among those who OCCASIONALLY get influencer content



#### Among those who RARELY get influencer content



#### Among those who NEVER get influencer content



*Creator/influencer question: "How often, if at all, do you get news and information online from individual content creators or influencers?"*

*Note: Survey of U.S. adults (N = 1,025) conducted September 12-21, 2024. Respondents were also asked about being able to go more or less in-depth on a story, seeing news from different sources, being able to engage with others and feeling a personal connection to the source of news. See topline for further data. Not so important, Not at all important and Refused/NA responses not shown.*

*Note: Although there is a 7 percentage point difference in the very important responses for regular consumers of influencer content, this difference does not reach conventional levels of statistical significance.*

Chart: Center for News, Technology & Innovation • Source: Americans who Rely on Content Creators or Influencers • Created with Datawrapper

- Among six factors important to choosing how to get informed, more than one-third of those who regularly get news and information from content creators or influencers select "getting the news quickly" (48%), "being able to go more or less in-depth on a story" (42%), "getting the news from professional journalists" (41%) and "seeing news from many different sources" (39%).

- They consider timeliness (“getting the news quickly”) and the source (“getting the news from professional journalists”) as comparably important; everyone else prioritizes the source (39-52% say it’s “very important”) over speed (25-30%). The full list of items asked about is available [here](#).

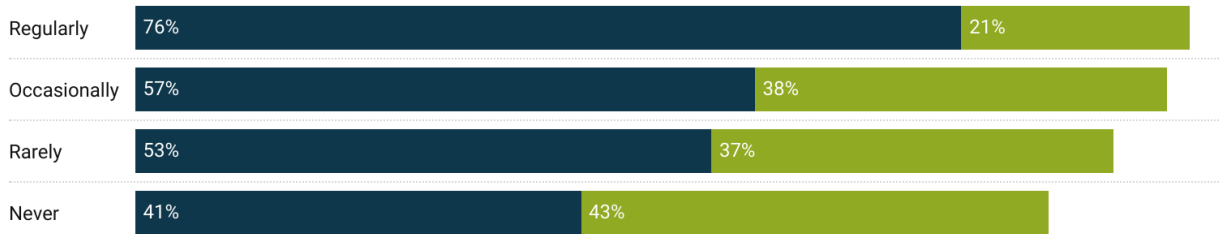
## ...have more technology-driven media habits than other Americans, but do not rely solely on social media

### Regular consumers of influencer content rely more on digital technology to keep informed

**Question:** How important is digital technology – such as computers, smartphones, apps, platforms and other tools – to your ability to keep informed about issues and events?

Very important    Somewhat important

Among those who get news from influencers...



Creator/influencer question: "How often, if at all, do you get news and information online from individual content creators or influencers?"

Note: Survey of U.S. adults (N = 1,025) conducted September 12-21, 2024. Not so important, Not at all important and Refused/NA responses not shown.

Chart: Center for News, Technology & Innovation • Source: Americans who Rely on Content Creators or Influencers • Created with Datawrapper

### Reliance on both social media and news organizations are related to consumption of creator/influencer content

**Question:** How do you most often follow news about issues and events?

Among those who get news from influencers...

A social media site or app

A specific news organization whether online, on TV, on radio or in print



Creator/influencer question: "How often, if at all, do you get news and information online from individual content creators or influencers?"

Note: Survey of U.S. adults (N = 1,025) conducted September 12-21, 2024. Options also included a news aggregator, an online search engine, a messaging app, email and word-of-mouth. No more than 13% of any subgroup selected any of these. Refused/NA responses not shown.

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- The more often people get news and information from content creators or influencers, the more likely they are to rate digital technology “very important” to their ability to get informed.<sup>2</sup>
- When asked which of seven different pathways people use most often for news, those who regularly get news and information from content creators or influencers are split between social media (39%) and a specific news organization (38%). The rest of Americans turn to specific organizations more often than social media.

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<sup>2</sup> Those who occasionally or rarely consume news and information this way are not significantly different but all other pairwise comparisons are different.

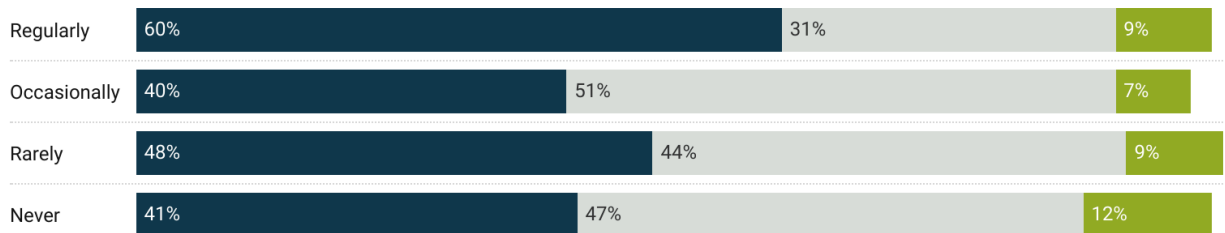
## ...are more optimistic than others about developments in technology

### Those who regularly consume influencer content are more positive about developments in digital technology for keeping informed

**Question:** Overall, do you think developments in digital technology — such as computers, smartphones, apps, platforms and other tools — will have a positive, neutral or negative effect on your ability to keep informed about events and issues of the day?

■ Positive ■ Neutral ■ Negative

Among those who get news from influencers...



Creator/Influencer question: "How often, if at all, do you get news and information online from individual content creators or influencers?"

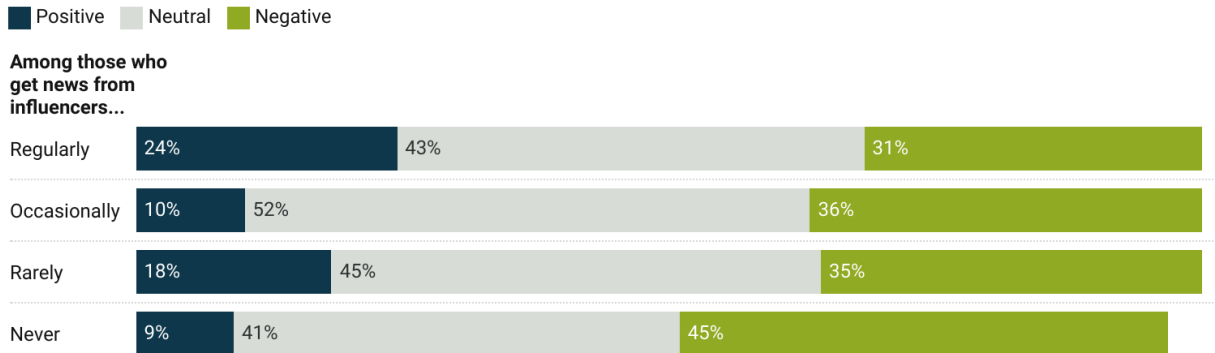
Note: Survey of U.S. adults (N = 1,025) conducted September 12-21, 2024. Refused/NA responses not shown.

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- A majority of those who regularly get news and information from content creators or influencers think digital technology will have a positive impact on their ability to keep informed; about half or less of all other groups agree.

## Regular consumers of influencer content are equally or more positive than others about the prospective impact of AI on their ability to keep informed

**Question:** Overall, do you think AI will have a mostly positive, neutral or negative impact on your ability to keep informed about issues and events?



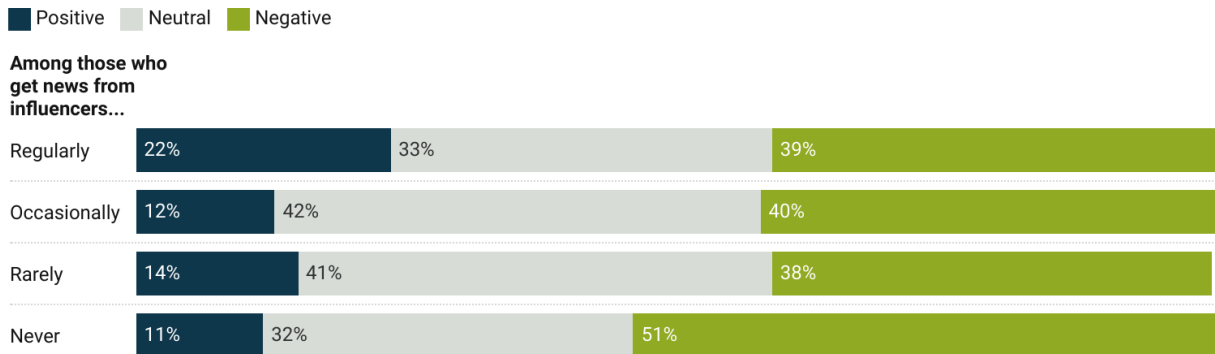
Creator/Influencer question: "How often, if at all, do you get news and information online from individual content creators or influencers?"

Note: Survey of U.S. adults (N = 1,025) conducted September 12-21, 2024. Refused/NA responses not shown.

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## Those who regularly consume influencer content are more positive about the prospective impact AI will have on journalists

**Question:** Overall, do you think AI will have a mostly positive, neutral or negative impact on journalists' ability to report about issues and events?



Creator/Influencer question: "How often, if at all, do you get news and information online from individual content creators or influencers?"

Survey of U.S. adults (N = 1,025) conducted September 12-21, 2024. Refused/NA responses not shown.

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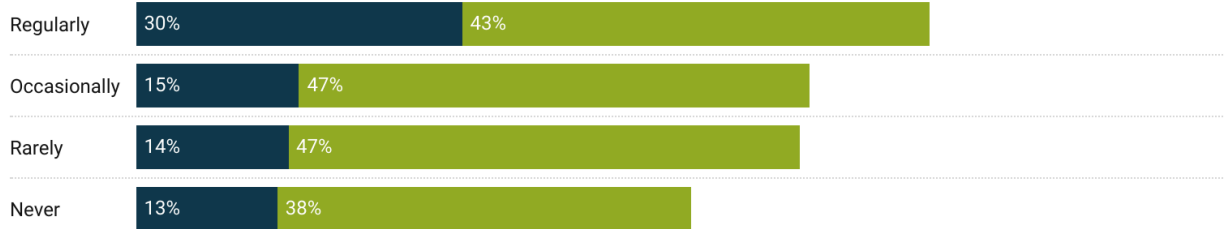
- When compared with other groups, they are equally or more positive about AI's long-term impact on both their ability to keep informed about issues and events and journalists' reporting ability.

## Regular consumers of influencer content are more confident the internet will be a place to get and share news openly in the future

**Question:** Looking ahead, how confident are you that the internet will be a place to get and share news openly?

Very confident    Somewhat confident

Among those who gets news from influencers...



Creator/Influencer question: "How often, if at all, do you get news and information online from individual content creators or influencers?"

Note: Survey of U.S. adults (N = 1,025) conducted September 12-21, 2024. Not so confident, Not at all confident and Refused/NA responses not shown.

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- Those who regularly get news and information from content creators or influencers are confident that the internet will remain an open place to share news, with 30% very confident, and an additional 43% somewhat confident. They are about twice as likely as others to be very confident.

## In conclusion

Those who regularly get news and information online from content creators or influencers are similar to other Americans in that they value news and journalism but they do not see journalism as the exclusive province of journalists.

They are also unique in other ways. They are the only group who does not prioritize getting the news from professional journalists over getting the news quickly. They see digital technology as very important to getting informed, more than how the rest of Americans see it. They are also more positive about developments in technology, including the future of the internet and the role of AI. That might be why they are more positive about their personal ability to keep informed.

Overall, this research points to the role that individual news creators play in many people's information habits. For the public, more traditional providers of journalism and individual providers have already begun to come together to provide a full news

experience. The way information providers may or may not collaborate and complete one another on the production side remains to be seen.

As the range of relied-upon sources for news and information continues to expand, there is a great deal more to learn about the public, news producers and the broader network of digital content (including its creation, access and sharing). CNTI looks forward to continuing to study these topics and collaborate with other researchers to better understand these areas of development in society.



# About this Study

## Why we did this study

News organizations are showing signs of [recognizing influencers and content creators as their colleagues](#). In the U.S. specifically, they were [invited in to cover the Democratic National Convention](#) this past summer and the new Trump administration has actively encouraged “podcasters and social media influencers” to [apply for press credentials](#) to cover the White House. Moreover, coverage of current conflicts — including those in [Gaza](#) and [Ukraine](#) — includes on-scene videos and updates shared by eye-witness content creators. Influencers are improving gaps in access to information in places where professional journalists are being [targeted](#) in the conflict or facing [legal restrictions](#) on reporting from war zones. CNTI is pleased to add to the expanding research in this area, including recent work from the [Reuters Institute](#) and [Pew Research Center](#).

As with all CNTI research, this report was prepared by the research and professional staff of CNTI. This project was financially supported by CNTI's [funders](#).

This report is part of CNTI's broader “[Defining News Initiative](#)” which examines questions surrounding this theme in policy, technological developments and the views of journalists, in addition to public perceptions. The survey data in this report measure the public's perceptions of news, journalism and technology in the United States. (Read our four-country survey report [here](#).) These data were collected in parallel with a [global survey of journalists](#).

CNTI was motivated by several overarching questions:

1. How does the public navigate new ways of being informed?
2. Where do they see journalism fitting in?
3. How can journalism do a better job of communicating its unique value?

Answers to these questions are central for better understanding the evolving information ecosystem. As CNTI learned in a series of [focus groups](#) last year in Australia, Brazil, South Africa and the United States, people are putting a lot of work into getting themselves up to speed on news. At the same time, many are actively [tuning news out](#), expressing a sense that it is overwhelming.

## How we did this

CNTI's survey questionnaire was developed internally by our research team and advisors in consultation with [Langer Research Associates](#). Focus groups were initially run in Australia, Brazil, South Africa and the United States which informed the development of the questionnaire. Additional details on themes from the focus groups may be found in a series of [essays](#) available on CNTI's [website](#).

In partnership with Langer Research Associates, the United States survey data were collected through Ipsos:

- **United States** data are from Ipsos's probability-based online KnowledgePanel® and was conducted from September 12-21, 2024. A total of 1,670 panelists were initially selected and 1,053 completed the survey. A total of 28 respondents were removed during the quality control process, yielding a final sample size of 1,025 respondents. The design effect was 1.13 and a margin of error of 3.3 points. The survey was available in English ( $n = 983$ ) and Spanish ( $n = 42$ ). All surveys were self-administered online, and the median interview length was 10 minutes and 23 seconds. The sample collection age categories were: 18-29, 30-44, 45-59 and 60+.

The question, "How often, if at all, do you get news and information online from individual content creators or influencers?" was only asked of the U.S. sample.

Technical reports from the survey vendors are available upon request from [info@innovating.news](mailto:info@innovating.news).

## How we weighted survey data

The data were weighted using demographic variables (i.e., age, sex, education and macroregion). While each individual country used a different age breakdown for sample collection, we opted to recode the age breakdown into the following categories: 18-29, 30-44, 45-54 and 55+. These categories were used to ensure there were at least 100 weighted respondents in each group.

For specific questions about the sample frames, weighting procedures and/or additional survey details, please send an email to the research team at [info@innovating.news](mailto:info@innovating.news).

## How we protected our data

Data was collected by the vendor. The survey included individual-level information such as age, gender, race, political ideology and macro-region. Survey data supplied to CNTI from the vendor did not include names or specific locations of respondents. Instead, each respondent received an unique identifier.

It would be very difficult, if possible at all, to identify survey respondents because CNTI did not collect personal contact information or contact respondents directly. The survey data for this project are securely stored in an encrypted folder that is only authorized to the core research team at CNTI.

## How we analyzed the data

Data were analyzed using the [R](#) statistical computing language. In addition to base R functions, several packages (libraries) were used to clean and analyze the data. These included: [googledrive](#), [pewmethods](#), [pollster](#), [survey](#) and [tidyverse](#). We recoded missing, refused and don't know responses into a catch-all category to keep the sample sizes for each country consistent across each question that did not explicitly have survey logic (i.e., questions that were asked to every respondent).

Data were analyzed using the demographic sample weights supplied by Ipsos and Langer Research Associates. These weights were applied to every analysis and crosstabs in this report. Non-statistical analyses consisted of topline and crosstabs. Statistical analyses found in this report consisted of Chi-square proportion tests (see the "How we tested for statistical significance" section below).

Exploratory analyses were run to learn about the data and responses. These methods consisted of both linear (ordinary least squares) and non-linear regression (logistic regression, ordered logistic regression).

## How we addressed data quality

Data quality in the open-ended responses received attention during the analysis phase of the project. CNTI worked with Langer Research Associates and country vendors to review what interviewers recorded from respondents' open ends. Several anomalies and mistakes were found and addressed where possible.

## How we tested for statistical significance

We analyzed the results using Chi-squared proportion tests to assess differences in responses between groups. We used a standard threshold of  $p < 0.05$  for assessing statistical significance. Differences mentioned in the report text are statistically significant.

## Additional notes

1. Responses to the question PSAIHELP1 and PSJHELP2 in the online U.S. survey were updated after recontacting individuals who responded "Don't know." Responses for recontacted individuals were added back into the survey as a new question and added to the answers from those who did not reply "Don't know."
2. The crosstab data for PSAIHELP1 and PSJHELP2 reflect all "Don't know" responses being grouped into the "DK/Refused/Missing" catch-all category.