

State of the news media in 2015: Facebook and mobile rule

April 29 2015, by Hillel Italie



In this Tuesday, April 28, 2015 photo, an unidentified person uses a mobile phone to read the news from The Huffington Post on Facebook, in Los Angeles. "State of the News Media 2015," published Wednesday, April 29, 2015, by the Pew Research Center's Journalism Project found that nearly half of Web users learn about politics and government from Facebook, roughly the same percentage as those who seek the news through local television and double those who visit Yahoo or Google News. (AP Photo/Richard Vogel)

A new report on the state of the media has some simple terms for how we learn about the world: mobile and social media.

More visitors to Yahoo, NBC and other top Internet sites are getting their news from mobile devices than from [desktop computers](#), according to "State of the News Media 2015," published Wednesday by the Pew Research Center's Journalism Project. Pew also found that nearly half of Web users learn about politics and government from Facebook, roughly the same percentage as those who seek the news through local television and double those who visit Yahoo or Google News.

"News is becoming more diverse in the ways that people connect with it," said Amy Mitchell, director of journalism research at the Pew center. Mitchell added that finding "new ways of connecting with and challenging" the audience is increasingly important for news outlets.

It's unclear whether the majority status of mobile users on Yahoo and elsewhere is new. Numerous studies in recent years have tracked the rise of hand-held devices, but Mitchell said that Pew did not have immediate information from previous years on the ratio between mobile and desktop users for online sites.

A trend toward mobile could be troubling for the future of longer stories, because the Pew report shows that people are more impatient on small screens than on desktops. On Yahoo, desktop readers in January 2015 averaged 3.9 minutes per visit, compared to 2.3 minutes for mobile. For NBC News Digital, the ratio is nearly 2 to 1, with 5.1 minutes for desktop and 2.6 minutes for mobile.



In this July 29, 2014 file photo, smoke and fire from an Israeli strike rise over Gaza City. The conflict in Gaza placed sixth on Facebook's list of most popular topics worldwide in 2014, based on the number of posts, comments, likes, photos and videos shared. "State of the News Media 2015," published Wednesday, April 29, 2015, by the Pew Research Center's Journalism Project found that nearly half of Web users learn about politics and government from Facebook, roughly the same percentage as those who seek the news through local television and double those who visit Yahoo or Google News. (AP Photo/Hatem Moussa, File)

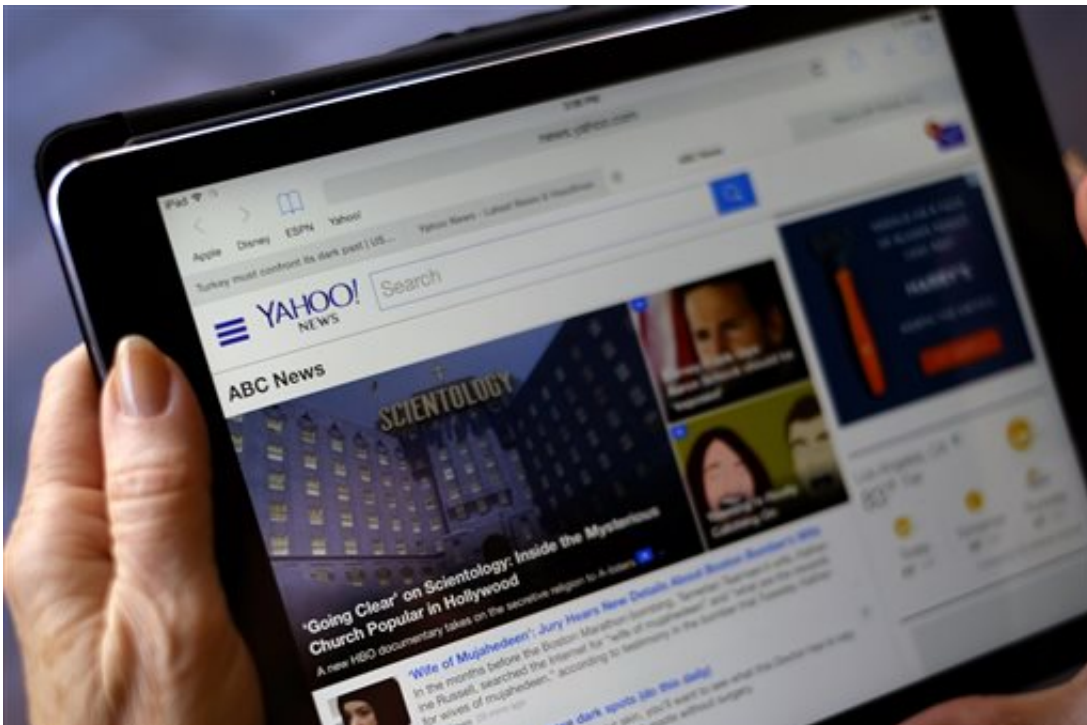
Yahoo/ABC is by far the most popular Internet news provider, with nearly 128 million unique visitors, according to Pew. CNN Network was second with just over 101 million visitors, closely followed by NBC News Digital. Other top online sources for news included the Huffington Post, CBS News and USA Today.

Mitchell said that it was still too early to draw any definitive conclusions on reading habits. She noted that desk top users were hardly in danger of becoming obsolete, as millions use both home computers and portable

screens, and that earlier studies showed that "many consumers do read long-form on their phones and tablet devices."

"It doesn't necessarily mean you can't do long-form content," she said. "It means that the ways people connect are different."

Pew had some good news for network television news, for which the audience grew by 5 percent in 2014, and local TV news stations, which had a 3 percent increase for evening news. Meanwhile, cable news prime-time viewership dropped by 8 percent and newspaper circulation fell by 3 percent. Digital ad revenues were up slightly for newspapers, but not enough to offset a 4 percent drop for print ads, an ongoing problem for papers.



In this Tuesday, April 28, 2015 photo, an unidentified person uses an iPad to read Yahoo/ABC News on the internet in Los Angeles. More visitors to Yahoo, NBC and other top Internet sites are getting their news from mobile devices than from desktop computers, according to "State of the News Media 2015,"

published Wednesday, April 29, 2015, by the Pew Research Center's Journalism Project. Yahoo/ABC is by far the most popular Internet news provider, with nearly 128 million unique visitors, according to Pew. (AP Photo/Richard Vogel)

Other findings in the annual report:

PODCAST FEVER: The "Serial" phenomenon was not a fluke. Podcast monthly listenership has nearly doubled since 2008, from 9 percent of Americans to 17 percent. One-third of Americans have listened to at least one podcast, compared to just 10 percent in 2006. More than half of those surveyed listened to online radio in the previous month, nearly double from 2010.

ALL-NEWS DECLINE: The number of all-news radio stations fell to 31, a drop of six since 2012. Ten of those stations are owned by CBS.

FAIR AND BALANCED: Average circulation remained largely unchanged for most of the leading [news](#) magazines, from Time to Rolling Stone. But, as if abiding by some greater law of political balance, significant drops were reported for a leading conservative publication, National Review, and a top liberal weekly, The Nation.

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