

Really? Most Americans don't suffer information overload

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Wait, can this be right? A new report from the Pew Research Center says that most Americans do not suffer from information overload—even though many of us frequently say otherwise.

Only 20 percent of the 1,520 people surveyed by Pew in April said they feel overwhelmed, compared to 27 percent who were asked the same question in 2006.

This appears to be a love-hate sort of thing.

Many people complain about the volume of [information](#) coming at us. But we want it. Adweek reported earlier this year that the [average person](#) consumes almost 11 hours of media per day.

That's everything from text messages to TV programs to reading a newspaper.

"The survey shows that most Americans are comfortable with their abilities to cope with information flows in their day-to-day lives," the Pew report says.

"Moreover, those who own more devices are also the ones who feel more on top of the data and media flows in their lives. Those who are more likely to feel [information overload](#) have less technology and are poorer, less well-educated and older."

Dan Hallin, a professor of communication at the University of California at San Diego, said Friday, "The fact that the volume on information circulating has increased doesn't necessarily mean that most people are consuming more of it. It doesn't even mean that they are exposed to more of it.

"The flow of information is growing partly because it is being targeted. There are more and more TV channels, but each has a small audience - a niche. It could be for young people, or for a particular generation. It doesn't go to everyone"

Hallin added that the recent national election showed that "in a lot of ways people live in small information bubbles. They get information on social media that has been filtered for them. It is filtered by the network they belong to. In a lot of ways, there's less information and much of it is less diverse than it was in an earlier era."

The public's hunger for that information is reflected in a study conducted by Bank of America. The bank found that 71 percent of the people they surveyed sleep within arm's reach of their smartphone. And 3 percent of those people hold their smartphone while they're in dreamland.

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