

Research suggests divide in how millennials value news

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Millennials with at least one college-educated parent are more inclined than other young adults to seek out news sources, Northwestern University research suggests.

Based on interviews with young [adults](#) from varying [socioeconomic backgrounds](#), the study looks at how [millennials](#) navigate the high-choice media landscape and the strategies they use to locate information about current events.

"My research illustrates a potentially serious divide in how young adults see the value of [news](#)," said Stephanie Edgerly, an associate at Northwestern's Institute for Policy Research and an assistant professor in the Medill School of Journalism, Media, Integrated Marketing Communications.

"One group of young adults sees clear value in turning to the news media to learn about current events, while the other has serious reservations about the news media's value in understanding an issue," she said.

By many accounts, the first generation to grow up in the digital age is less interested than previous generations in following the news, relying instead on social network sites for their information. This leads to questions about the role of the media in developing an informed society.

But the truth is much more nuanced, according to Edgerly, who conducted in-depth interviews with 21 young adults, ages 18 to 27.

The first group of young adults—primarily from households with at least one parent who went to college—articulated strategies that directly involved using the news media for current events information.

The second group also had specific strategies for locating current events information, but their strategies avoided direct use of the news media.

"Millennials with at least one college-educated parent were more aware of their [news media](#) options and used this knowledge when articulating the steps they take to find information about current events," Edgerly

said.

In this era of fake news, it is interesting to note that the research also showed millennials are highly skeptical and do not believe everything they read. Young adults understand they need to be discerning consumers of information. However, the strategies millennials have for satisfying this need are very different.

"We need to resist thinking about young adults—often called millennials, or digital natives—as a monolithic group," Edgerly said. "My findings point to key differences in how [young adults](#) respond to the same information scenarios."

More information: Stephanie Edgerly. Seeking Out and Avoiding the News Media: Young Adults' Proposed Strategies for Obtaining Current Events Information, *Mass Communication and Society* (2016). [DOI: 10.1080/15205436.2016.1262424](#)

Provided by Northwestern University

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