

news and broadcast television, according to a new RAND Corporation report.

The report draws from a [national survey](#) of 2,543 Americans to examine how reliability, demographics and political partisanship factor into news choices and how often people seek out differing viewpoints in the news. It is the latest in a series of RAND-funded reports into Truth Decay, the phenomenon defined as diminishing reliance on facts, data and analysis in American public life.

"A lack of time and competing demands may explain why a third of Americans turn to news sources they deem less reliable, which suggests improving the quality of news content or teaching people how to 'better consume' news isn't enough to address Truth Decay," said Jennifer Kavanagh, senior political scientist and co-author of the report. "Media companies and other news providers may need to provide more easily accessible and digestible ways for individuals to consume high quality investigative journalism."

About 44 percent of respondents reported that news is as reliable now as in the past, while 41 percent said it has become less reliable and 15 percent—mostly women, racial and ethnic minorities and those without [college degrees](#)—said it is more reliable.

Respondents who lean on print and broadcast platforms were more likely to deem them reliable. Those who rely on [social media](#) and peers for news, on the other hand, don't see those platforms as reliable yet still choose to get their news from these sources.

"Our findings suggest that perceived reliability is not the only factor that drives what Americans choose as their go-to [news sources](#)," said Michael Pollard, a sociologist and lead author of the report. "Despite acknowledging that there are more reliable sources for news, people with

demands on their time may be limited to using less reliable platforms."

Asked whether they ever seek out alternate viewpoints when catching up on the news, 54 percent said they "sometimes" do, 20 percent said, "always or almost always," 17 percent said "infrequently," and 9 percent said, "never or almost never."

"Political partisanship was linked to whether or not individuals were willing to seek out different viewpoints," Pollard said. "For example, those who self-identified as more liberal were more likely than conservatives to report that they 'never or almost never' seek differing views."

The report also identified the four most common combinations of news media types consumed by Americans: [print publications](#) and broadcast television; online; radio; and social media and peers.

The survey was conducted via the RAND American Life Panel, a nationally representative, probability-based panel of more than 6,000 participants who are regularly interviewed over the internet. Age was an important predictor of how respondents obtain news. Perhaps unsurprisingly, those who are younger were more likely to get news from social media and peers, while older individuals were more likely to get their news from print publications and broadcast television.

Those who are college-educated were less likely to get their news from social media and peers, instead opting for radio and online sources. Those with less than a college education were more likely to report "never or almost never" seeking out news with alternate viewpoints.

Those who are married were three times more likely than singles to rate their peers as the most reliable source for news. Unmarried people were more likely than married people to report they "always or almost always"

seek out sources with differing views.

Past reports in the Truth Decay series have looked at different aspects of the changed media and information landscape, including a linguistic analysis that found increasing subjectivity in "new media" sources compared to more traditional forms of [news](#), as well as an examination of [media](#) literacy initiatives in the United States. Future reports will include research into Americans' trust in public institutions and the prevalence of Truth Decay in Europe.

Provided by RAND Corporation

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