

A few useful expressions and references

The First Amendment to the US Constitution
 The Fourth Estate / The Fourth Power
 Quality papers vs the gutter press
 Mainstream media / alternative media sources
 Holding accountable
 Tabloids / popular press ≠ quality papers / dailies
 Whistleblowers
 The Pentagon Papers / The Watergate Scandal
 Edward Snowden / Chelsea Manning / Julian Assange / Wikileaks / “The Fifth Estate” (film)
 Reporters Without Borders / Press Freedom Index
 World Press Freedom Day (May 3)
 Investigative journalism
 News deserts
 Fact-checking / Fake news / Conspiracy theories
 Post-truth / Confirmation bias / echo chambers / Siloing
 SLAPPs
 NPR / PBS / Voice of America



Press freedom under threat

Document 1 a - World Press Freedom Index 2025 by **RF**

Reporters sans frontières

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JZFZ_QiXqWQ&ab_channel=Reporterssansfronti%C3%A8res

Document 1 b- Europe leads world in media freedom rankings — but Greece trails again

www.politico.eu, May 2, 2025

Europe has the freest media in the world according to Reporters Without Borders' annual press freedom ranking — though Southern and Eastern Europe are lagging behind the rest of the continent and the world overall is struggling.

The RSF World Press Freedom Index released its yearly report and map on Friday, and it's particularly good news for journalists in the Nordics and Baltics.

The top 15 countries were all in Europe, with Norway scoring the highest, followed by Estonia, the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland and Denmark. Norway frequently tops press freedom rankings, with robust legal protections and a thriving media market.

France (25) and Italy (49) both dropped several places compared to 2024, while the United Kingdom (20) improved 10 slightly and Poland (31) leaped more than a dozen spots.

Greece recorded the worst result in the European Union for the fourth year in a row, coming in at 89. The main reasons for its lackluster score include wiretapping of journalists by intelligence agencies using Predator spyware, government interference, intimidatory lawsuits and inadequate legal guardrails.

Its Balkan neighbors also fared poorly, with Croatia (60), Bosnia (86), Serbia (96) and Kosovo (99) all among the 15 worst in Europe.

For the first time since the index's inception in 2002, the average score out of 100 fell below 55, with journalism conditions classified as "difficult" or "very serious" in more than half of all countries assessed. RSF cited economic instability and media concentration as factors contributing to a worsening press freedom climate.

In the Middle East, dozens of reporters have been killed during Israel's military assault in Gaza, the organization 20 said. Iran, Syria, China, North Korea and Eritrea were ranked the five worst countries in the world to be a journalist, with non-existent press freedom.

The United States fell two places to 57. President Donald Trump's administration is bringing about a "troubling deterioration" through funding cuts to public media and foreign aid, RSF added.

Here is *The Guardian's* series of report published on World Press Freedom Day

<https://www.theguardian.com/media/world-press-freedom-day-2025>

DOCUMENT 2 · NBC, "NPR CEO warns public broadcasting cuts will cause 'stations to go dark' as soon as next quarter", July 17, 2025.

<https://youtu.be/ygsljPr9fmQ> (8 minutes)

N.B.: The House of Representatives voted in favour of the recission bill on 18 July. It became law following the President's signature on 24 July.

DOCUMENT 3 · PBS, "CBS says Colbert cancelation was financial decision", July 19, 2025.

<https://youtu.be/J5dkwpS0QHo> (9 minutes)

DOCUMENT 4 · PBS, "Political cartoonists on navigating a changing media landscape", April 26, 2025.

https://youtu.be/36_y5p2-J3M (8 minutes)

Document 5 - As U.S. Dismantles Voice of America, Rival Powers Hope to Fill the Void

Tiffany Hsu, *The New York Times*, June 27, 2025 (abridged)

America's rivals celebrated as the Trump administration set out to dismantle its global influence and information infrastructure, including the media outlets that had helped market the United States as the world's moral and cultural authority.

The editor in chief of RT, the Kremlin-backed news network, crowed about President Trump's "awesome decision" to shut down Voice of America, the federally funded network that reports in countries with limited press freedom. "Today is a holiday for me and my colleagues!"

Hu Xijin, a former editor in chief of China's state-run outlet Global Times, wrote that the paralysis of Voice of America and Radio Free Asia was "really gratifying" and, he hoped, "irreversible." A top aide to Prime Minister Viktor Orban of Hungary posted that he "couldn't be happier" about the administration's move in February to gut the agency that distributed foreign media funding. Officials in Cambodia and Cuba also welcomed the cuts.

In the months since, China, Russia and other U.S. rivals have moved to commandeer the communications space abandoned by the Americans. They have pumped more money into their own global media endeavors, expanded social outreach programs abroad and cranked up the volume when publicizing popular cultural exports.

Foreign policy experts say the Trump administration is not just losing its grip on the global megaphone but handing it off to its eager adversaries. In doing so, they said, the United States is relinquishing its primacy as a global influencer and neglecting its defenses against the damaging narratives and disinformation that could fill the vacuum.

"What we're doing, in a sense, is playing into their hands," said Catherine Luther, a professor at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, who has studied Russian influence. "These states tend to be the leaders in creating the playbook for other countries to use."

The White House did not respond to a request for comment.

The United States was a pioneer of global message management, carefully cultivating its international reputation using movies, music, news, and other totems of culture and media to project aspirational American appeal. Supporting communications — through programs like Voice of America and grants for local independent outlets — has always been a key component of that so-called soft power.

But since January, the Trump administration has shut down a foreign influence task force at the Federal Bureau of Investigation, closed a State Department office that tracked and countered global disinformation, and crippled other teams that helped safeguard the American brand from overseas falsehoods and malign propaganda campaigns. A former Trump speechwriter who is currently acting as the under secretary for public diplomacy, a role intended to engage and understand foreign audiences, once posted that "competent white men must be in charge if you want things to work."

The agency overseeing government-funded media outlets like the Radio Free stations and Voice of America, which reached hundreds of millions of people internationally each week, was gutted. A White House press officer reacted on X with a post listing "goodbye" in 20 languages. (A federal appeals court in Washington ruled last month that the Trump administration could continue for now to withhold funding from the stations, which have scaled back their operations. Instead, experts said, the Trump administration is focusing on other expressions of might, such as economic pressure and military force.)

"The soft power suicide of the U.S. will be incomprehensible to future historians who will be dumbfounded in their attempts to explain why the global leader voluntarily wrecked one of its greatest national assets," wrote Jamie Shea, a British former official at the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and current senior fellow at Friends of Europe, a research institution. [...]

For decades, the United States telegraphed its influence and values abroad using an older communications infrastructure built on radio and text, and was slow to embrace the digital platforms that now connect much of the world. Voice of America has 727,000 followers on Instagram, where its last post is from 14 weeks ago, and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's English language account has 44,500 (although there are 17.4 million total followers across the network's various language services). One of the accounts for China's Xinhua News has 1.6 million followers, and BBC News has 29.2 million.

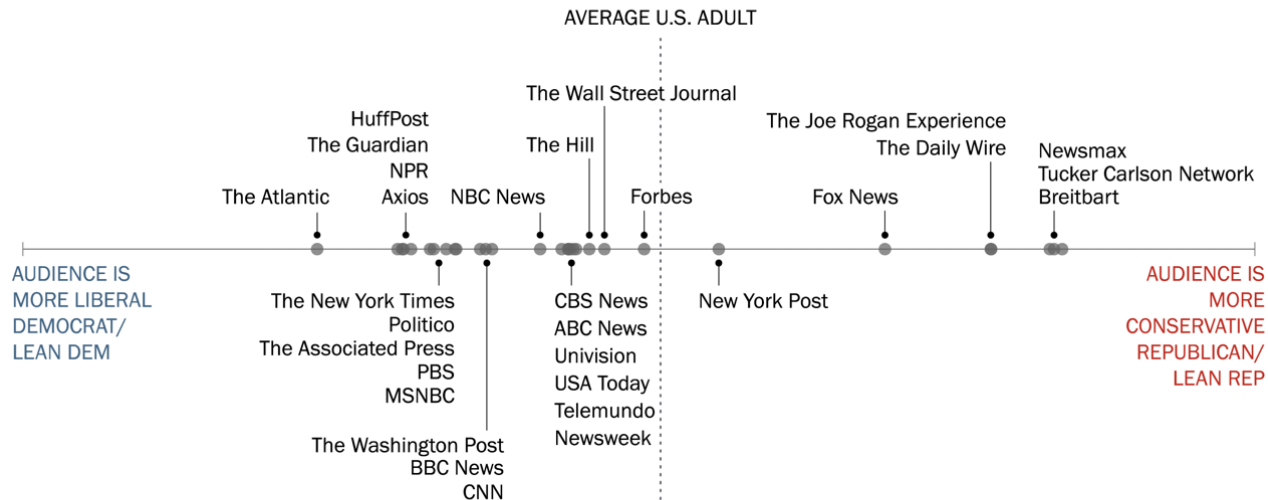
"When you declare 'America First' and you start berating your allies and friendly countries, you lose trust and you lose attraction," Joseph S. Nye Jr., the American political scientist who coined the term "soft power," said in an online briefing in March. (Mr. Nye died in May.) [...]

DOCUMENT 6

Pew Research Center, “The Political Gap in Americans’ News Sources”, June 10, 2025

Where regular users of 30 news sources place themselves by party, ideology

Average party and ideological self-placement of U.S. adults who regularly get news from each source



Note: This study analyzes the audience of each source, but *not* its content. Lists labeling multiple points are ordered from sources with more liberal Democratic/Democratic-leaning audiences on top to those with more conservative Republican/Republican-leaning audiences on the bottom. Order of sources does not necessarily indicate statistically significant differences. Refer to the methodology for details.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted March 10-16, 2025.

“The Political Gap in Americans’ News Sources”

Pew Research Center, “The Political Gap in Americans’ News Sources”, June 10, 2025

DOCUMENT 7 - Young UK journalists lean towards activist roles, away from objectivity – new survey

Imke Henkel, *The Conversation*, 23 April 2025 (abridged)

The role of journalists has been changing for some time now. Due to the rise of social media, journalists no longer hold the monopoly on informing the public and holding the powerful to account. Nor do they keep their role as exclusive gatekeepers for news. And many readers find that algorithms do a better job of selecting news than human editors.

5 For a new report on the state of the journalism profession in the UK in the 2020s, my colleagues and I asked journalists what they think their role in society should be today. Facing a world of rising authoritarianism, war in Europe and catastrophic climate change, a younger generation of UK journalists increasingly believe they should occupy a more activist role in society.

10 We asked a representative sample of 1,130 UK journalists how important a selection of 24 roles were to them. These included informer roles such as “being a detached observer”, to advocating roles such as “promote peace and tolerance” and audience-oriented roles such as “provide entertainment and relaxation”. We measured their answers on a scale from “not at all important” to “extremely important”.

15 These questions were part of a wider survey my colleagues Neil Thurman, Sina Thäsler-Kordonouri and I conducted at the end of 2023. Our survey is the UK leg of the third wave of the Worlds of Journalism Study, a global project researching the state of journalism across 75 countries.

The survey follows a similar one conducted eight years earlier. Comparing journalists’ answers to both allows us to understand how their professional attitudes have changed.

Then and now, the roles journalists hold to be most important are those considered to be the traditional purpose of journalism: being a detached observer (linked to objectivity), providing analysis of current affairs, and – the classic watchdog role – monitoring and scrutinising those in power. More than half of our respondents thought that these roles were “extremely” or “very important”.

However, we found a notable shift in which roles journalists emphasise over others. While they still consider their traditional roles to be essential, many appear to be leaning more towards activist roles, and away from roles linked to objectivity.

In 2015, 77% of respondents thought that “being a detached observer” was “extremely” or “very important”. In 2023, it was 69%. Tellingly, there is also a generational shift. While 74% of respondents over 40 rate their role as detached observers as very or extremely important, just 60% of those under 40 do.

UK journalists’ interest in the more activist watchdog role has risen between 2015 and 2023. It should be noted that the question was asked slightly differently in 2015. Then, 48% found it very or extremely important to monitor and scrutinise political leaders, and 59% thought the same about business. In 2023, 65% considered monitoring and scrutinising those in power very or extremely important.

In general, we found that as younger journalists are turning away from roles that can be considered more neutral, such as “providing analysis of current affairs”, they are becoming more interested in more activist roles. [...]

Recent political and social upheavals have raised confronting questions about journalists’ role in society.

In the aftermath of Brexit, journalists were accused of failing their democratic role. So-called mainstream media have been criticised by alternative media for supposedly reinforcing the establishment’s agenda. And journalists’ traditionally most treasured value – objectivity – has been questioned in the face of the war in Ukraine, social movements such as Black Lives Matter and existential threats like climate change. It’s no wonder that many journalists themselves are perturbed by what is happening to their profession.

Our survey points to a notable shift in journalists’ professional attitudes. UK journalists, especially the younger generation, seem to respond more to the pressures that challenge their traditional roles. Meanwhile, local news outlets and legacy media emerge as the most determined advocates for journalism’s democratic role.

The dispute about the contested value of journalistic objectivity has become a bellwether for journalists’ changing professional culture. Our survey shows that, while still important for UK journalists, it is indeed eroding.

Document 8 - America’s News Influencers

The creators and consumers in the world of news and information on social media **Pew Research Center**, November 2024

In the heat of the 2024 election, news influencers seemed to be everywhere. Both Republicans and Democrats credentialed content creators to cover their conventions – and encouraged influencers to share their political messages. Influencers also interviewed the candidates and held fundraisers for them.

What is a news influencer?

In this study, we use the term “news influencers” to refer to individuals who regularly post about current events and civic issues on social media and have at least 100,000 followers on any of Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X (formerly Twitter) or YouTube. News influencers can be journalists who are or were affiliated with a news organization or independent content creators, but they must be *people* and not organizations.

Refer to the methodology for more about how we identified news influencers.

But up until now, it has been difficult to get a sense of the size and characteristics of this new wave of news providers.

A unique Pew Research Center study provides a deeper understanding of both the makeup of the news influencer universe and its audience. The project includes an **in-depth examination of a sample of 500 popular news influencers** and the content they produce, derived from a review of more than 28,000 social media accounts. We also conducted a **nationally representative survey of Americans** to better understand who regularly gets news from news influencers.

Key findings about news influencers

- About one-in-five Americans – including a much higher share of adults under 30 (37%) – say they regularly get news from influencers on social media.
- News influencers are most likely to be found on the social media site X, where 85% have a presence. But many also are on other social media sites, such as

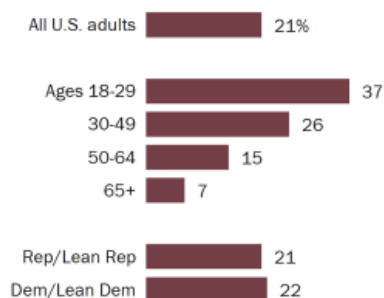
Instagram (where 50% have an account) and YouTube (44%).

- Slightly more news influencers explicitly identify as Republican, conservative or pro-Donald Trump (27% of news influencers) than Democratic, liberal or pro-Kamala Harris (21%).
- A clear majority of news influencers are men (63%).
- Most (77%) have no affiliation or background with a news organization.

How many Americans get news from influencers, and what is their experience?

Almost 4 in 10 U.S. adults under 30 get news from news influencers

% of U.S. adults who regularly get news from news influencers on social media



Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted July 15-Aug. 4, 2024.
"America's News Influencers"

PEW-KNIGHT INITIATIVE

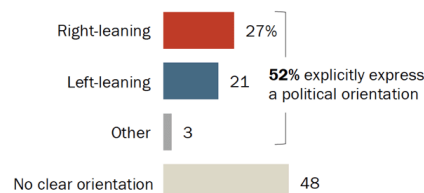
- **About one-in-five U.S. adults (21%) say they regularly get news from news influencers on social media**, according to a survey of 10,658 Americans conducted in summer 2024. This is especially common among younger adults: 37% of those ages 18 to 29 say they regularly get news from influencers. But there are **minimal differences between Republicans and Democrats on this question**.
- Among Americans who get news from news influencers on social media, most (65%) say news influencers have **helped them better understand current events and civic issues**. And seven-in-ten say the news they get from news influencers is **at least somewhat different from the news they get from other sources**. Far fewer (31%) say they feel a personal connection to a news influencer.
- These Americans also say they get a variety of different types of information, from **basic facts and opinions to funny posts and breaking news**. When it comes to opinions, most who see them say they are an even mix of opinions they agree

and disagree with (61%), but **far more say they mostly agree with what they see (30%) than mostly disagree (2%)**.

News influencers are mostly men; more explicitly identify as right-leaning than left-leaning

More news influencers explicitly identify as right-leaning than left-leaning

% of news influencers who explicitly identify as ...



Note: Right-leaning includes people who explicitly identify as conservative, Republican or express support for Donald Trump. Left-leaning includes liberals, Democrats and people who have explicitly expressed support for Joe Biden or Kamala Harris. "Other" includes independent or moderate, libertarian, or other ideologies. Political orientation could be expressed in account bios, recent social media posts, personal and professional websites and news coverage. Source: Pew Research Center analysis of 500 influencers with over 100,000 followers who regularly posted about news on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X or YouTube in early 2024. Refer to methodology for details.

"America's News Influencers"

PEW-KNIGHT INITIATIVE

- Among the news influencers in our sample, **men outnumber women by a roughly two-to-one margin**: 63% of influencers are men, compared with 30% who are women. (The remainder either are nonbinary or their gender could not be determined by researchers.)
- Many Republicans have long believed that social media sites censor conservative viewpoints. But overall, **more news influencers explicitly present a politically right-leaning orientation than a left-leaning one** (27% vs. 21%) in their account bios, posts, websites or media coverage. About half of influencers do not express any clear political orientation. Influencers on Facebook are particularly likely to prominently express right-leaning views: There are three times as many explicitly conservative news influencers (39%) as liberal ones (13%) on the site.
- **Nearly one-in-five news influencers (18%) share part of their identity or beliefs beyond their political orientation**, such as expressing support for a specific political cause or value through words, images or emojis on their account page. Among the most common expressions are LGBTQ+ identity or support (6%) or being pro-Palestinian (5%).

RFI, Issued on: 22/06/2025

The findings come from the Reuters Institute's annual Digital News Report, released this week. The Oxford University-affiliated study surveyed nearly 97,000 people across 48 countries to track how global news habits are shifting.

The study found that a notable number of people are using AI chatbots to read headlines and get news updates – a shift described by the institute's director Mitali Mukherjee as a “new chapter” in the way audiences consume information.

While only 7 percent overall say they use AI chatbots to find news, that number rises among younger audiences – 12 percent of under-35s and 15 percent of under-25s now rely on tools such as OpenAI's ChatGPT, Google's Gemini or Meta's Llama for their news. “Personalised, bite-sized and quick – that's how younger audiences want their news, and AI tools are stepping in to deliver exactly that,” Mukherjee noted.

Beyond reading headlines, many readers are turning to AI for more complex tasks: 27 percent use it to summarise news articles, 24 percent for translations, and 21 percent for recommendations on what to read next. Nearly one in five have quizzed AI directly about current events.

AI 'hallucinations'

However, trust remains a sticking point. Many respondents to the survey said they worry AI could make news reporting less transparent and more prone to errors.

The technology's so-called "hallucinations" – when a chatbot fabricates information – continue to worry both readers and journalists.

Despite these risks some news organisations see opportunities within AI usage. In France, the news agency Agence France-Presse (AFP) has signed a deal with French AI firm Mistral, giving its AI models access to AFP's news archive.

However, other global media outlets, such as the *New York Times*, have taken a more combative stance, launching copyright lawsuits against AI developers including OpenAI for allegedly misusing their content without permission.

TikTok dominance

The report also highlighted how traditional media – TV, radio, newspapers and even conventional news websites – is losing ground to social networks and video-sharing platforms.

Almost half of 18 to 24-year-olds now say they get most of their news via social media – particularly TikTok, which dominates among young audiences in countries such as India, Brazil, Indonesia and Thailand.

Despite the upheaval since Elon Musk's takeover and rebranding of Twitter, the social media platform X remains a go-to for many seeking news. “Many more right-leaning users, especially young men, have flocked to X, while some progressive users have drifted away,” the report noted.

In the United States, 23 percent of people said they use X for news – up eight percentage points from last year – with a similar trend observed in Australia and Poland.

In contrast, alternatives to X such as Threads, Bluesky and Mastodon have yet to gain significant traction for news, with each capturing just 2 percent or less of the market.

See The Digital News Report for yourself

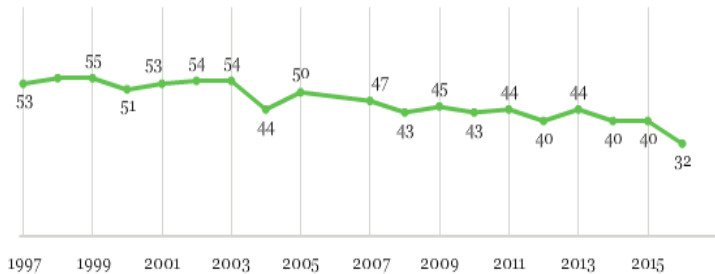
Interactive <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2025/interactive>
The Summary of the report is [HERE](#)

More Links and resources

Americans' Trust in the Mass Media

In general, how much trust and confidence do you have in the mass media -- such as newspapers, TV and radio -- when it comes to reporting the news fully, accurately and fairly -- a great deal, a fair amount, not very much or none at all?

■ % Great deal/Fair amount

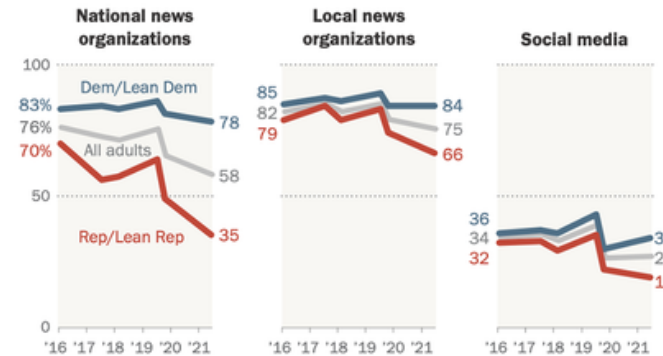


GALLUP

- **The International consortium of Investigative Journalists**
<https://www.icij.org/>
 See for instance their page on The Panama Papers investigation
<https://www.icij.org/investigations/panama-papers/>
- **Interactive briefing *The Economist***
<https://www.economist.com/interactive/briefing/2022/05/03/press-freedom>
- **Video by *The Economist* on Press Freedom endangered**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oivsUv_08Zk&t=2s&ab_channel=TheEconomist
- **The Reporter Without Borders' Index**
<https://rsf.org/en/index>
Their report on the UK <https://rsf.org/en/country/united-kingdom>
Their report on the U.S. <https://rsf.org/en/country/united-states>
- **The International Federation of journalists' page on media concentration**
<https://www.ifj.org/what/press-freedom/media-concentration>
<https://www.ifj.org/what/press-freedom/media-concentration>
- **The Freedom House Reports**
<https://freedomhouse.org/reports>
 On the media : <https://freedomhouse.org/issues/media-freedom>

Wider partisan gaps emerge in trust of national and local news organizations, social media

% of U.S. adults who say they have a lot or some trust in the information that comes from ...



Note: In 2016, trust of information from social media was only asked of and based on internet-using U.S. adults.
 Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted June 14-27, 2021. For dates of other surveys, see the topline.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

- **2025 Digital News Report from the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism**
<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2025>
- **The full report by The Pew Research Center – How Americans View journalists**
<https://www.pewresearch.org/journalism/2025/08/20/how-americans-view-journalists-in-the-digital-age/>
- **The full report by the Pew Research Center on News Influencers** [HERE](#)

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- ♦ listen to this
<https://www.npr.org/2025/05/02/nx-s1-5384784/president-trump-orders-end-to-federal-funding-for-npr-and-pbs>
- ♦ watch this **Cut in US funding will be 'disastrous': Hundreds of local NPR, PBS affiliates rely on federal grants – France 24 English**
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0F0bImQw_sY&ab_channel=FRANCE24English

