

# Media Habits, Civic Engagement, and Lifestyle of Young Texans

A report based on the 2017 Texas Media and Society Survey

Prepared by the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life Moody College of Communication The University of Texas at Austin

# **Executive Summary**

Based on a 2017 survey of 986 Texans, this report provides an overview of the media habits, community and lifestyle, and civic engagement of individuals between 18 and 29 years old. Overall, this age cohort tends to engage less in the news, in their communities, and in civics, though it should be noted that this trend is not necessarily new for younger generations. Here are some of the highlights from the report:

### Media Habits

- Eighty percent of under-30s use Facebook, compared to 70 percent of individuals between 30 and 44, two-third between 45 and 59 years old, and 56 percent over 60. However, individuals under 30 are just as likely as any other age group to get news from Facebook.
- Under-30s are more likely than other age groups to get information about local politics from friends, family, and co-workers. While this age group pays less attention to local news in general, the youngest cohort reported paying closer attention to national and international news than individuals in the 30-to-44 age group.
- Eighty percent of 18 to 30-year-olds use their smartphones to access the news.

#### Community and Lifestyle

- Nearly 72 percent of under-30s are not active in any kind of community, religious, or service organization. This is true for about 50 percent of other age groups.
- Individuals 18 to 29 are less likely than other age groups to interact with the people in their neighborhood. About half have never had a discussion with other people about problems in their community.

#### Civic Engagement

- While about 75 percent of under-30s agree it is important to vote in elections in order to be a "good citizen," 31 percent also say they do not know enough to cast an informed vote.
- Sixty percent of under-30s were registered to vote in 2017. This is consistent with the number of registered voters between the ages of 30 and 44.
- Fifty-five percent of under-30s reported that they voted in the 2016 Election. This is six points higher than the number of voters between the age of 30 and 44.

## Introduction

The Texas Media & Society Survey, created in 2015 by the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life, seeks to capture the voice of Texans and Americans on the media, civic engagement, and politics. The survey specifically measures how people consumed the news, became involved in their local communities, and engaged with the government in 2017.

The survey also captures the perspective of younger voting-age Texans, a growing group of individuals who are more diverse, educated, and tech savvy than their older counterparts. Does the increased ease of access to a proliferation of information in the digital age combat youth voter apathy?

Results show that young people still tend to engage less in their communities, the government, and the news media. Those between the ages of 18 and 29 spend more time on social media sites than their older counterparts but there was no statistical difference between the different groups' use of those sites to access the news. Under-30s engage in their local communities less often than older Texans and have a more pessimistic view of whether they are able to cast an informed vote.

However, there are some positive notes for youth engagement. Young people reported that they often pay attention to international news at the same rate as some older groups. Also, the numbers for voter registration and turnout held constant between 18 to 29-year-olds and 30 to 44-year-olds. This could mean that the younger generation is ready to process world politics and have the potential to surpass the next age group in civic engagement given time.

The following pages describe the results of the 2017 Texas Media & Society Survey of 986 Texans. Responses were analyzed across gender, age, education, and partisanship. Those demographics were subsequently included in the appendix, and a note on survey methodology can be found at the end of this report.

### **Media Habits**

The Texas Media and Society Survey measured how Texas residents consume their news, including what types of news and specific sources they follow. To get the full story of how different age groups tend to read, watch, or listen to the news, it will also be important to look at social networking site use and local news consumption as well.

now closely reople rollow Types of News						
		18-29	30-44	45-59	60+	
International	Very Closely	15%	11%	13%	22%	
	Somewhat or Not Very	67%	72%	74%	72%	
	Not At All	17%	15%	13%	5%	
National	Very Closely	21%	18%	28%	40%	
	Somewhat or Not Very	64%	68%	63%	56%	
	Not At All	14%	12%	9%	5%	
Local	Very Closely	24%	34%	49%	52%	
	Somewhat or Not Very	63%	55%	47%	47%	
	Not At All	13%	9%	3%	1%	
Political	Very Closely	11%	17%	24%	38%	
	Somewhat or Not Very	73%	65%	64%	55%	
	Not At All	16%	16%	12%	6%	

#### How Closely People Follow Types of News

Individuals under the age of 30 were the least likely to follow international, national, local, or political news, especially compared to individuals over the age of 60. Looking across each age category there is a clear trend in which each younger age group pays less attention to each type of news. However, there was not a statistically significant difference between the responses of individuals ages 18 to 29 and individuals ages 30 to 44. Under-30s also reported closer attention to international and national news than 30 to 44-year-olds at 15 and 21 percent compared to 11 and 18 percent, respectively.

#### Social Networking Site Use

	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
Facebook	80%	70%	67%	56%
Twitter	25%	20%	18%	8%
Snapchat	37%	12%	5%	2%
Instagram	47%	27%	15%	7%
YouTube	51%	45%	41%	27%
Reddit	10%	2%	3%	1%
None	7%	17%	24%	33%

The table above related to social media use reveals that the majority of each group uses Facebook, with over 50 percent of each group reporting use. YouTube is the next most frequently used site. The largest discrepancies are with Snapchat and Instagram, where the largest viewership by far comes from the under-30s.

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		18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
Print	Often	6%	8%	12%	31%
	Sometimes	15%	23%	31%	30%
	Hardly Ever or Never	79%	67%	56%	38%
Television	Often	27%	48%	68%	84%
	Sometimes	38%	38%	22%	13%
	Hardly Ever or Never	34%	13%	9%	3%
Radio	Often	15%	24%	26%	26%
	Sometimes	43%	43%	42%	30%
	Hardly Ever or Never	41%	31%	30%	43%
Computer	Often	32%	23%	33%	36%
	Sometimes	28%	36%	43%	35%
	Hardly Ever or Never	40%	40%	23%	27%
Smartphone	Often	41%	31%	33%	19%
	Sometimes	37%	39%	32%	24%
	Hardly Ever or Never	21%	28%	35%	56%

How Often People Get News From Certain Media

The trends shown in the table above are consistent with what has been widely reported: younger generations tend to access the news media less by print, television, or radio, and more through the internet. In fact, the under-30s reported the most regular access to news through their smartphones than other age groups, with 41 percent reporting that they "often" receive news from their phones. While it seems that the youngest group also consumes news through their computers more often than the next age group, the difference was not statistically significant.

News Sources Used in Past 2 Weeks						
	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+		
Local TV News	30%	48%	63%	71%		
ABC's World News Tonight	20%	20%	31%	40%		
Local Newspaper	14%	17%	21%	39%		
CNN	14%	24%	28%	34%		
Fox News	11%	14%	28%	34%		
Instagram	10%	5%	2%	0%		
MSNBC	6%	9%	13%	23%		
Reddit	5%	0%	1%	0%		
NPR	4%	12%	9%	16%		
Rush Limbaugh Show	0%	4%	6%	11%		
Drudge Report	0%	1%	5%	4%		

#### News Sources Used in Past 2 Weeks

The table above is vertically sorted by news sources used most-to-least frequently by the age group under 30. The same trend remains similar for other age groups except for Instagram, Reddit, NPR, and the Rush Limbaugh Show. The latter two sources were accessed less often by the youngest age group than by other groups.

Local Political News Source in Past Month							
	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+			
Television	39%	56%	67%	81%			
Newspaper	14%	12%	21%	45%			
Social Networking Site	33%	20%	19%	11%			
Mobile Apps	9%	5%	9%	3%			
Family, Co-Workers, Friends	36%	19%	25%	23%			
None	25%	20%	12%	5%			

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The above table specifically measure the use of different local political news sources in the past month. The results, as expected based on prior observations, show that 18 to 29-year-olds watch less television news than older age groups. However, there was not a statistically significant difference in the viewership of local news through the newspaper between 18 to 29-year-olds and 30 to 44-year-olds. Furthermore, and again as expected, the under-30s consumed more local news through social networking sites and mobile apps than every other age group. More than one-third (36 percent) of the youngest group also got more local news through their family, coworkers, and friends. This is a larger number than any other age group.

### **Community and Lifestyle**

The survey asked participants how strongly they think of their local communities as a "real home," whether they participate in certain kinds of groups, and how involved they are in their communities.

*How Strongly People Think of Local Community as a Real Home* 

	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
Does Not Feel Like a Real Home	15%	8%	13%	9%
Unsure	28%	19%	13%	13%
Does Feel Like a Real Home	56%	71%	74%	77%

Note: The unsure category includes responses in which the participant felt that their local community neither was nor was not a real home.

The table above reveals a mostly consistent trend in respondents believing their local communities were "real homes" for all age groups over the age of 30. However, the under-30s tended to answer that their local community does not feel like a real home more often. A large portion of the two younger groups also responded that they felt that they were unsure of whether they felt that their community was a real home, with a statistically significant difference from the older two groups.

#### **Group Membership**

	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
Community Group or Neighborhood Association	7%	7%	18%	14%
Church Group or Religious Organization	16%	28%	24%	34%
Charitable or Service Organization	4%	3%	9%	10%
None	72%	58%	53%	52%

Under-30s were much less likely to report group membership, with a statistically significant drop in involvement in church or religious groups as compared to 30 to 44-year-olds.

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	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+	
A Few Days a Week	11%	20%	21%	31%	
Once a Week	20%	20%	16%	18%	
Every Two Weeks	13%	11%	19%	14%	
Monthly	36%	30%	26%	24%	
Never	19%	17%	17%	13%	

How Often People Interact with Others in Neighborhood

The oldest age group, individuals 60 and older, interact the most frequently with people in their neighborhood, as nearly one-third responded that they interact at least a few days a week. The three younger age groups all reported that they were most likely interact with their neighbors monthly. Under-30s were less likely to interact with neighbors than the other age groups, with a statistically significant difference between the youngest Texans and over-30s.

How Often People Discuss Community Problems with Others

	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
A Few Days a Week	4%	4%	7%	11%
Once a Week	12%	9%	9%	11%
Every Two Weeks	13%	11%	12%	14%
Monthly	22%	36%	38%	33%
Never	49%	37%	35%	32%

In a similar vein to the previous question, the survey asked participants how often people discuss community problems with others. However, for each age group, there was a precipitous drop in these discussions as compared to neighbor interactions. Texans were most likely to respond that they discussed community problems either monthly or not at all. Nearly half of under-30s never discuss these problems, a statistically significant drop as compared to all other age groups.

# **Civic Engagement**

The Texas Media and Society Survey measured several metrics of civic engagement, including how Texans define "good citizenship," voter confidence, and voter registration and turnout. The survey also measured how often people make civic actions such as signing a petition, contacting a government official, or other political involvement.

		18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
Report a Crime	Important	87%	83%	92%	97%
	Unsure	8%	9%	5%	3%
	Unimportant	3%	4%	2%	1%
Obey All Laws	Important	81%	84%	90%	95%
	Unsure	11%	12%	7%	4%
	Unimportant	4%	2%	2%	0%
Serve in the Military	Important	31%	41%	65%	71%
	Unsure	49%	41%	27%	19%
	Unimportant	17%	16%	6%	9%
Serve on a Jury	Important	65%	68%	84%	87%
	Unsure	26%	16%	10%	7%
	Unimportant	6%	12%	5%	4%
Vote in Elections	Important	76%	78%	86%	92%
	Unsure	15%	15%	10%	5%
	Unimportant	7%	6%	2%	3%
Form Political Opinions	Important	69%	70%	79%	83%
	Unsure	23%	21%	15%	13%
	Unimportant	6%	7%	4%	4%

#### Importance of Certain Activities to Be a "Good Citizen"

The survey asked respondents what sorts of activities were important in order to be a "good citizen." Younger age groups tend to be more ambivalent about the importance of obeying laws, serving on a jury, voting, and forming opinions on politics and current events. However, under-30s were more forceful about labelling military service as "unimportant" to be being a good citizen. The responses of the 30 to 44-year-olds were not statistically different to the youngest age group.

% Who Agree with Phrase,		e, "My Vo	"My Vote Doesn't Matter		
	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+	
Agree	27%	32%	17%	19%	
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	25%	18%	15%	12%	
Disagree	48%	48%	67%	69%	

Under-30s were less confident about the importance of their votes than other age groups, though the 30 to 44-year-old age group did not give statistically different agreement to the phrase, "my vote doesn't matter." About one-third (32 percent) of respondents between 30 and 44 reported this response, and 27 percent of under-30s thought their vote didn't matter.

% Who Agree with Phrase, "I Don't Know Enough to Cast an Informed Vote"					
	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+	
Agree	31%	22%	18%	13%	
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	23%	25%	22%	17%	
Disagree	44%	51%	60%	69%	

Similar to the previous question, the under-30s and the 30 to 44-year-old group were the least confident in their ability to cast an informed vote, with a statistically significant difference in responses from the other age groups. One-third of the youngest age group agreed with the phrase, "I don't know enough to cast an informed vote." This response tracks with the infrequent news consumption that this age group reported, as seen above in the media habits section of this report. Consuming less news could account for the lack of voter confidence.

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	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
Contacted a Politician	6%	10%	14%	26%
Donated Money to a Political, Ethical, or Environmental Group	7%	4%	12%	23%
Participated in Political Activities Over the Internet	4%	4%	6%	12%
Written a Letter to a Newspaper Editor or Called in to a Radio Show	1%	0%	3%	5%

#### **Civic Actions in Past Year**

The group over the age of 60 took the most action related to civic participation by a wide margin, about one-fourth of the participants reported that they had contacted a politician or donated money to a cause in the past year. In comparison, less than 10 percent of under-30s participated in civic actions in the last year, which is not statistically different than the group aged 30 to 44.

#### Voter Registration

	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
Registered	60%	59%	83%	91%
Not Registered	31%	31%	14%	7%
Don't Know	8%	9%	3%	2%

Looking at voter registration data for 2017 shows potentially positive news for young voter engagement. While younger people are less likely to be registered in general, the same amount of 18 to 29-year-olds are registered as 30 to 44-year-olds. As this group gets older, voter registration numbers for the youngest Texans could surpass the next age cohort.

Voter Turnout in 2016 General Election						
	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+		
Did Vote	54%	49%	79%	87%		
Did Not Vote	39%	44%	18%	12%		
Don't Know	7%	6%	3%	0%		

Voter turnout for the November 2016 Election reveals again that while the most likely voters were over the age of 45, more than half of the youngest Texans also voted. Further, there was not a statistical difference in the number of voters who were between 18 and 29 and voters who were 30 to 44.

# Appendix

The following tables show demographics in which there was a statistically significant difference between age groups. Under-30s tend to be more educated, diverse, and liberal than their older counterparts.

Educational Attainment, By Age						
	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+		
Less than High School	4%	24%	22%	16%		
High School	25%	27%	22%	30%		
Some College	42%	21%	33%	28%		
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	29%	27%	23%	26%		

It is notable that while part of the 18 to 29-year-old age group is not old enough to go to college, they still had the largest share of respondents, 71 percent, who reported "some college" or "bachelor's degree or higher." This indicates a statistically significant gap in education between the youngest age group and the next oldest (30 to 44-year-olds), in which only 48 percent of respondents had at least some college.

Race or	Ethnicity			
	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
White	32%	42%	53%	64%
Black	12%	8%	16%	9%
Other	10%	4%	4%	2%
Hispanic	44%	45%	27%	24%
2+ Races	1%	1%	1%	1%

The table above, displaying the race or ethnicity of Texans, show a steady diversification across the age groups. The time in which Texas became a majority-minority state is evident where the individuals under 45 are more likely to be Hispanic than white.

U.S.	Citizenship			
	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
Yes	87%	76%	91%	97%
No	13%	24%	9%	3%

Not only are younger Texans more diverse, but they are also likely not to have citizenship status. The two younger age groups contain the largest percentages of non-citizens.

Partisan Aj	ffiliation			
	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
Republican	39%	46%	48%	51%
Democrat	57%	52%	51%	44%
Independent	3%	1%	2%	5%

Note: Respondents who identified as Independents who lean Republican or who lean Democrat were added to those categories, respectively

The partisan affiliation table above shows that while Texans over the age of 60 are most likely to be Republicans, each other age group leans more towards the Democrats. However, there was not a statistically significant difference in party identification between the younger three age groups.

Approval	of Preside	nt Trump		
	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
Approve	14%	28%	39%	45%
Disapprove	73%	57%	52%	49%
Don't Know	9%	5%	3%	2%

Note: Respondents who 'somewhat' approve or disapprove of the president were added to those categories, respectively

While the partisan split was at least somewhat even in most age groups, the presidential approval rates for each age group are smaller than the percentage that identify with the Republican Party. Under-30s had the lowest approval rating at just 14 percent, while individuals over 60 had the highest at 45 percent. There was not a statistically significant difference between the approval ratings of the under-30s and Texans who were 30 to 44 years old.

Household Income					
	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+	
Up to \$12,500	14%	14%	8%	4%	
\$12,500 - \$30,000	16%	11%	8%	11%	
\$30,000 - \$60,000	25%	26%	20%	26%	
\$60,000 - \$125,000	37%	34%	40%	36%	
\$125,000 +	7%	15%	23%	23%	

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The household income reported by different age groups is as would be expected: older age groups tend to be more affluent. However, the over-60 age group skews the data, as there is not a statistical difference in the levels of income earned by the younger three age groups.

The following tables display demographics under-30s in which there was a statistically significant difference across education attainment, race or ethnicity, partisan affiliation, or approval of President Trump.

of 10-25-year-blas, Educational Attainment, by Nace of Etimicity							
White Black Other Hispanic 2+ Ra							
Less than High School	9%	17%	5%	10%	10%		
High School	18%	30%	37%	23%	10%		
Some College	34%	27%	32%	39%	40%		
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	39%	27%	26%	28%	40%		

The table above shows education attainment by race or ethnicity among the age group of 18-29year-olds. However, there is no statistical difference in education by race or ethnicity pairs of White and Black, White and Hispanic, and Black and Hispanic, respectively.

Of 18-29-year-olds, Educational Attainment, By Partisan Affiliation							
Republican Democrat Independent							
Less than High School	7%	13%	0%				
High School	19%	21%	47%				
Some College	40%	32%	37%				
Bachelor's Degree or Higher	34%	35%	16%				

Also, the distribution of the age cohort of under-30s is not statistically different in education attainment by a partisan affiliation pair of Republican and Democrat.

Of 18-29-year-olds, Educational Attainment, By Approval of President Trump				
	Approve	Disapprove	Don't Know	
Less than High School	8%	12%	13%	
High School	25%	19%	35%	
Some College	43%	30%	43%	

### Of 18-29-year-olds, Educational Attainment, By Approval of President Trump

Of 18-29-year-olds, the level of education does not reveal any significant difference in the approval ratings of President Trump.

39%

9%

Of 18-29-year-blas, Fartisan Affination, by Approval of Freshent Tramp				
	Approve	Disapprove	Don't Know	
Republican	77%	19%	43%	
Democrat	20%	76%	43%	
Independent	3%	5%	14%	

Of 18-29-year-olds, Partisan Affiliation, By Approval of President Trump

25%

Bachelor's Degree or Higher

The table above related to approval of President Trump under-30s demonstrates that there is a noticeable discrepancy across partisan affiliation. Especially, Republicans and Democrats between 18 to 29 years olds have a substantial and significant difference in the approval ratings.

Of 18-29-year-olds, Partisan Affiliation, By Race or Ethnicity					
	White	Black	Other	Hispanic	2+ Races
Republican	48%	7%	26%	26%	10%
Democrat	46%	87%	58%	69%	80%
Independent	6%	7%	16%	5%	10%

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The distribution of partisan affiliation in the age group of under-30s uncovers differences in race or ethnicity. The pairs of White and Black and White and Hispanic have statistically significant differences in partisan affiliation while the pair of Black and Hispanic does not show difference in partisan affiliation.

# Methodology

The Texas Media & Society Survey was created by the Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life at the University of Texas at Austin. The survey was fielded by GfK Group (formerly Knowledge Networks). GfK employs a probability-based sampling strategy to recruit panelists to participate in surveys. They originally used random digit dialing to recruit panelists until 2009 when they moved to physical address-based sampling methods. Those without Internet access are provided with a web-enabled device and free Internet service so that they can complete surveys online.

For this particular study, 3,478 were sampled for participation across the United States and Texas, and 2,044 completed the survey. Non-responders were sent email reminders on day 3, 10, and 13 of the field period. Surveys were available in both English and Spanish. Data collection took place between May 25, 2017 and June 12, 2017. Respondents had to be at least 18 years old to participate. The margin of error for the Texas sample is 3.12 and the margin of error for the U.S. sample is 3.01. Weights were applied to each sample were employed in this report. Population data was drawn from the 2015 Current Population Survey and used to weight the sample based on age, race, gender, region, education, homeownership, and income. The table below describes the unweighted data and the percent of key demographics within the samples.

	Те	xas	U.S.		
	Sample Size	% of Sample	Sample Size	% of Sample	
Total	986	100%	1058	100%	
Male	440	45%	545	52%	
Female	546	55%	513	48%	
18-29	114	12%	168	16%	
30-44	194	20%	230	22%	
45-59	293	30%	274	26%	
60+	385	39%	386	36%	
High School or					
Less	359	36%	376	36%	
Some College	271	27%	316	30%	
College or More	356	36%	366	35%	
Republican	465	47%	459	43%	
Democrat	457	46%	544	51%	

Unweighted Sample Size and Percent of Key Demographics

The data reported here are weighted. The weights for the U.S. take into account gender, age, race/ethnicity, region, education, household income, household with Internet access, and primary language. For the Texas data, the weights take into account gender, age, race/ethnicity, metropolitan status, education, household income, and primary language.

For this report, we computed cross-tabulations comparing questions of interest with four chosen age groups (ages 18-29, 30-44, 45-59, and over 60). When the Rao-Scott chi-square statistic was

statistically significant (confidence > 95%), we report the findings, otherwise we do not. Additionally, we note in text the statistical significance (confidence > 95%) of key differences between specific age groups. Note that for partisanship, we include leaners as partisans in the data and exclude those who do not have any party leaning from the analysis. While participants were given the option to refuse to answer certain questions, those responses are not included in the tables.

The full questionnaire and additional information about the survey are available at <u>TXMediaAndSociety.org</u>.

# Acknowledgments

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