



## ISSUE BRIEF

---

# THE MEDIA PLATFORMS THAT ARE SHAPING DETROITERS' VIEWS

DECEMBER 2023  
BY MARA CECILIA OSTFELD AND YUCHENG FAN

## OVERVIEW

This report highlights news media consumption trends from three surveys administered by [the Detroit Metro Area Communities Study \(DMACS\)](#). The first of the three surveys, which provides data on the modes of news media consumption, was fielded between November 3, 2021, and December 15, 2021, and captures the views of a representative sample of 1,900 Detroit residents. The second of the three surveys, which provides information on the social media platforms that Detroiters turned to for their news, was fielded between January 26, 2023, and March 29, 2023, and captures the views of a representative sample of 1,911 Detroit residents. The third survey used in this report provides information on the specific YouTube sources from which Detroiters obtained news. This survey was administered from June 22, 2023, through August 29, 2023, and captures the views of 2,501 Detroit residents. This report offers an overview of where Detroiters are going for their news. While no news medium is reaching all Detroiters, the findings presented offer insights on how to effectively reach different subsets of Detroit residents. Results have been weighted to reflect the population of the City of Detroit. [See full results from DMACS surveys here.](#)

## INTRODUCTION

Access to high-quality information is one of the most important elements of a healthy democracy.<sup>1</sup> Yet, over the past few years, concerns about misinformation have become widespread. In Detroit, widely disproven information about the [COVID-19 vaccine](#), the [security of recent elections](#), and, most recently, the [Israel-Hamas conflict](#) has circulated throughout the city and led to widespread confusion. Beliefs in inaccurate information can not only lead to individuals making personal decisions that are not in line with their goals, but also impact how they evaluate various policies.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, misinformation furthers social and political divisions, which inhibits the exchange of ideas and the civic fabric of a community.<sup>3</sup>

As the world enters a new era of misinformation, many have sought to understand how to better reach and empower local residents with high-quality information. In this brief, we explore news media consumption patterns and ask how Detroiters are accessing news about events happening beyond their immediate social circles.<sup>4</sup> Where are Detroiters turning for their news? By understanding where Detroiters generally go for their news, community leaders and public officials can learn how to better reach and engage them in civic and political processes. Equally important, knowing where different Detroiters get their news can enhance our understanding of the information environments that are helping to shape individuals' views of the world.

## TV IS, BY FAR, THE MOST COMMONLY RELIED UPON MEANS OF GETTING NEWS AMONG DETROITERS.<sup>5</sup>

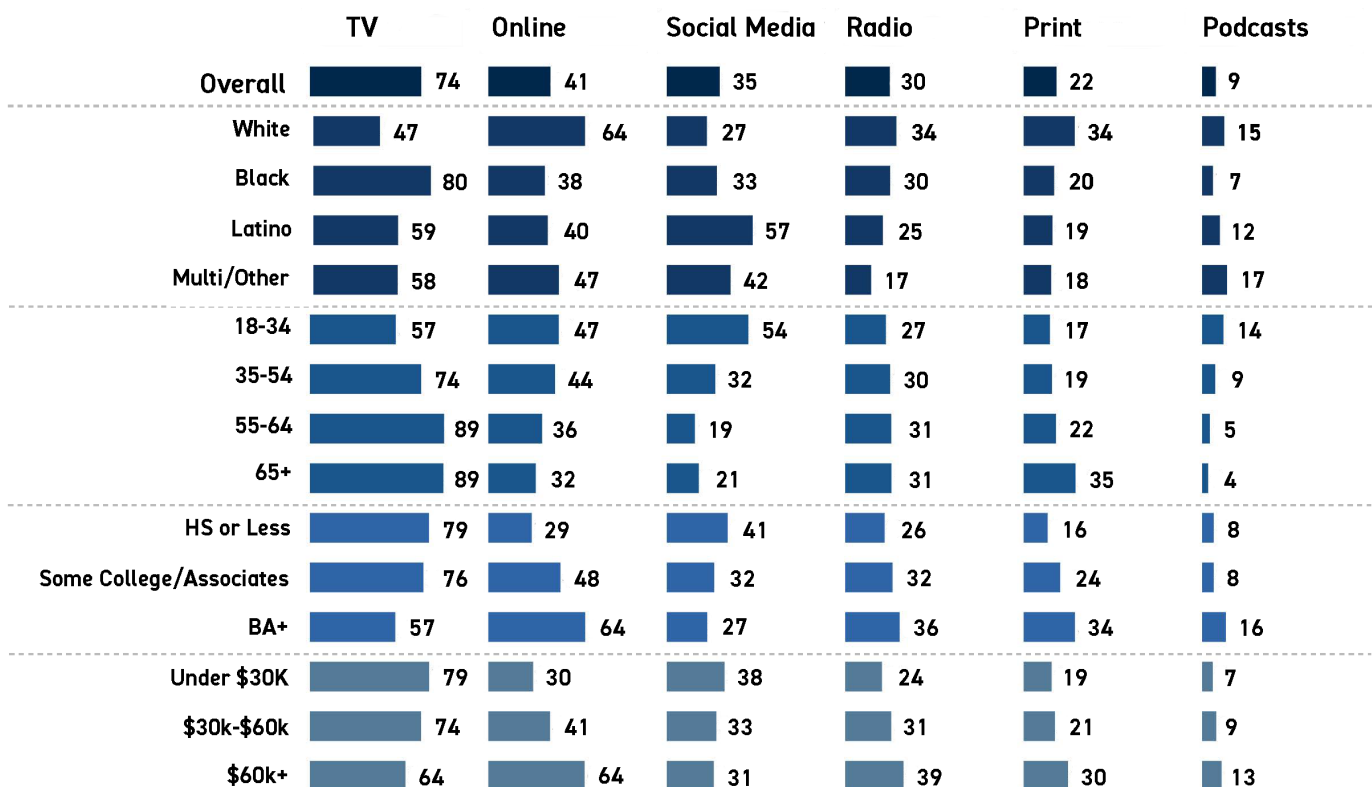
- About three out of four Detroiters (74%) get news from television sources. This makes television, by far, the most commonly relied upon mode for obtaining information about events and issues extending beyond one's friends and family.
  - Local television sources are particularly popular among Detroiters, according to responses to open-ended survey items. The most frequently mentioned local sources included Fox2, NBC4 and ABC7.
  - Among Detroiters who turn to national television news, CNN and MSNBC were the most frequently mentioned sources in responses to open-ended questions.



- Online news media sources are the second most common means of accessing the news with 41.3% of Detroiters reporting that they typically get their news from online news media sources.
  - When asked to name specific sources, Detroiters mentioned news outlets that are exclusively digital (e.g. Bridge, Vox and Huffington Post), online versions of print news media sources (e.g. detroitnews.com, freep.com, nytimes.com, cnn.com), as well as news media aggregators (e.g. Google News and Yahoo News).
- More than one-third of Detroiters (35.2%) get news from social media, with Facebook and YouTube being the social media sources that Detroiters said they turn to most often for news.
- About 3 in 10 Detroiters (29.7%) get news from radio programs.
  - Many of the radio sources that Detroiters shared in an open-ended question were traditional news radio (e.g. NPR or WWJ).<sup>6</sup> However, many Detroiters also reported getting their news from radio stations that primarily play music (e.g. WJLB or WMXD). Others explicitly referenced the morning talk programs broadcast on local music stations, like the Breakfast Club and Steve Harvey in the Morning, as a source that they typically get their news from.
- Just over one-fifth of Detroiters (21.9%) get news from print news sources, like newspapers or magazines.
  - *The New York Times* and the *Detroit Free Press* were the most commonly mentioned print news media sources in responses to an open-ended follow-up question.
- Detroiters are less likely to report getting news from podcasts than any of the other listed sources. Just under 1 in 10 Detroiters (9.2%) reported getting their news from podcasts.

**Figure 1: Typical News Media Sources, by Demographic Group<sup>7</sup>**

% of each group who reported they typically get news from each of the following media sources



## THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES IN WHERE BLACK, WHITE, AND LATINO DETROITERS TYPICALLY GO FOR NEWS.

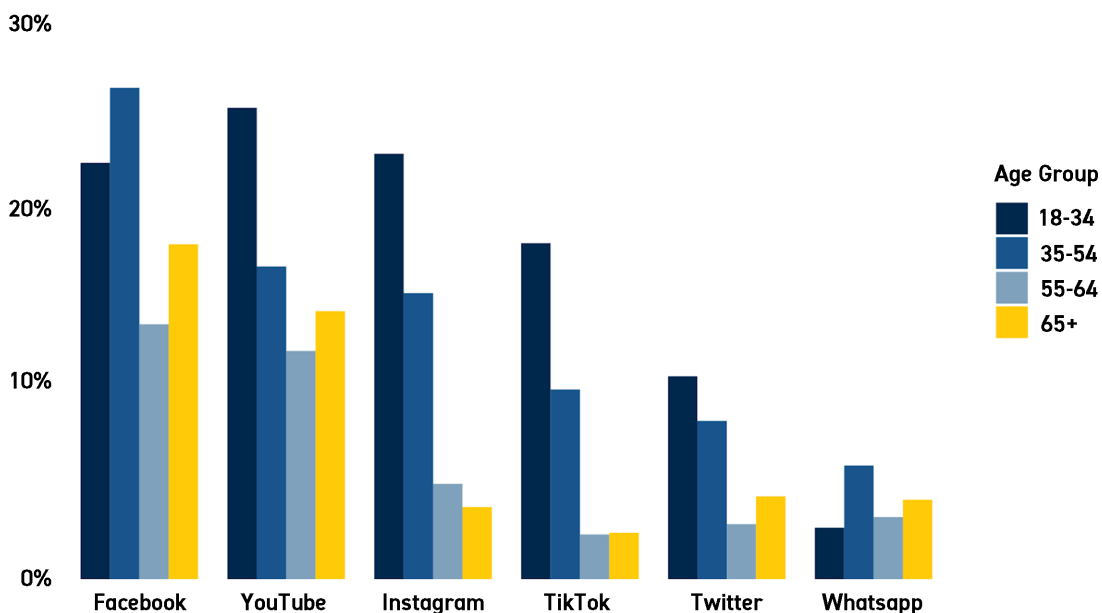
- Black Detroiters (80.5%) are far more likely to turn to television for their news than White (46.6%) or Latino (58.7%) Detroiters.
- Among Latino Detroiters, social media is more commonly relied upon than other news media sources. Just under 6 in 10 Latinos (57.2%) reported that they typically get news from social media, compared to about one-third of Black Detroiters (33.4%) and about one-quarter of White Detroiters (26.7%).
- White Detroiters (64.3%) are most likely to get news from online news media sources and are more likely to do so than Black (37.6%) or Latino (39.6%) Detroiters.
- Print sources are also more likely to be a regular news source for White Detroiters (34%) than for Black (20.3%) or Latino (19.2%) Detroiters.

## YOUNGER DETROITERS ARE MORE LIKELY TO RELY ON SOCIAL MEDIA FOR THEIR NEWS THAN OLDER DETROITERS, BUT YOUNG DETROITERS ARE STILL RELYING HEAVILY ON TELEVISION NEWS.<sup>8</sup>

- Over one-half of Detroiters between 18 and 34 (54.3%) said they typically get their news from social media. Social media is a less popular source of news for older Detroiters, with under one-third of Detroiters between 35 and 54 (32.3%) getting news from social media, under one-fifth of Detroiters between 55 and 64 (18.7%), and 21.3% of Detroiters 65 and older.
- While Detroiters between 18 and 34 are more likely than older Detroiters to turn to social media for their news, they are more likely to say they typically get their news from television than any of the other listed news formats (57.1%).
- A much larger share of Detroiters between 35 and 54 (74%) and Detroiters over 54 (89%) typically turn to television sources for news, relative to the younger cohort of Detroiters between 18 and 34 (57.1%).

**Figure 2: Usage of Social Media, by Age**

*% of each age group who reported they "often" get news from each social media platform sources*

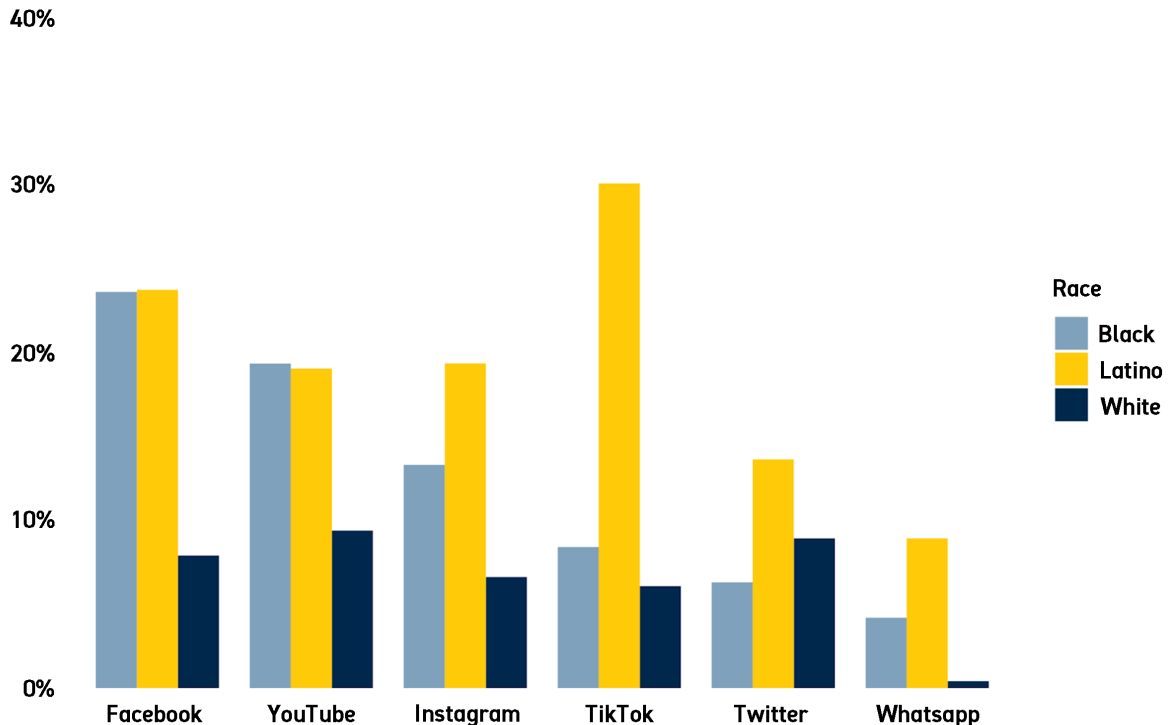


# AMONG DETROITERS GETTING THEIR NEWS FROM SOCIAL MEDIA, YOUTUBE RIVALS FACEBOOK AS THE MOST POPULAR SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM FOR NEWS.

- About 1 in 5 Detroiters reported that they “often” get their news from Facebook (21.3%) or YouTube (18.1%).
  - Among those who reported regularly getting news on YouTube, Roland Martin, The Young Turks, and MeidasTouch were among the most frequently mentioned channels in response to an open-ended question.<sup>9</sup>
- Overall, younger Detroiters are turning to social media for their news more than older Detroiters, but the size of the age gap varied across social media platforms.
  - Detroiters between 18 and 35 are far more likely to use Instagram (23%) and TikTok (18.1%) “often” than Detroiters over 64, who infrequently use Instagram (3.9%) and TikTok (2.5%) for news.
  - Detroiters under 35 (25.4%) were slightly more likely than their older counterparts to report that they “often” get news from YouTube. However, there was little variation by age among Detroiters 35 and over, with around 15% of all Detroiters 35 and over reporting that they often get their news from YouTube.
- Similar to other forms of media, there are significant racial differences in the social media sources that Detroiters rely on for their news.
  - Latino Detroiters, the most likely to report getting news from social media (57%), reported going to TikTok (30.1%), Facebook (23.8%), Instagram (19.4%), and YouTube (19.1%) often for their news.
  - About one-third of Black Detroiters (33%) reported that they typically get some of their news from social media. Among Black Detroiters, Facebook (23.7%), YouTube (19.4%), and Instagram (13.3%) are the most commonly relied upon social media platforms for news.
  - White Detroiters, the least likely to report getting their news from social media (27%), were most likely to turn to YouTube (9.4%), Twitter (8.9%), or Facebook (7.9%) “often” for their news.

**Figure 3: Usage of Social Media, by Race**

*% of each ethnoracial group who reported that they get news from each social media platform “often”*



## TELEVISION AND SOCIAL MEDIA ARE KEY TO REACHING DETROITERS WITH FEWER YEARS OF EDUCATION, WHILE ONLINE AND RADIO SOURCES ARE WIDELY USED AMONG DETROITERS WITH MORE EDUCATION.

- Those with less formal education and lower household incomes are more likely to get their news from television sources or social media.
  - Seventy-nine percent of Detroiters with a high school degree or less turn to television for news, while 75.5% of Detroiters with some college turn to television for news, and 56% of Detroiters with a bachelor's degree or more get their news from television sources.
  - Education was also associated with Detroiters' preferred television news sources. Detroiters with lower levels of formal education were more likely to turn to Fox News than those with higher levels of formal education. Detroiters with higher levels of formal education, on the other hand, were more likely to turn to CNN.
  - Four in 10 Detroiters with a high school diploma or less turned to social media for news. This was significantly greater than the share of Detroiters with some college (31.6%) and Detroiters with a bachelor's degree or more (26.7%) that get news from social media.
- Detroiters with more years of formal education are more likely to go online, listen to the radio, or listen to podcasts for news than those with fewer years of formal education.
  - About two-thirds (64.4%) of Detroiters with a bachelor's degree or more regularly go online for their news, compared to 48% of Detroiters with some college and 28.9% of Detroiters with a high school degree or less.
  - Over one-third of Detroiters with a bachelor's degree or higher (36.2%) get their news through radio, compared to about one-quarter of Detroiters with a high school degree or less (26.2%).
  - While podcasts were the least common sources of news media, those with more education are far more likely to rely on them. Detroiters with a bachelor's degree or more (15.8%) were about twice as likely to turn to podcasts for their news, compared to Detroiters with some college (7.8%) or a high school degree or less (7.8%).



## ENDNOTES

- 1 Kuklinski, J. H., Quirk, P. J., Jerit, J., Schwieder, D., & Rich, R. F. (2000). Misinformation and the currency of democratic citizenship. *The Journal of Politics*, 62(3), 790-816.
- 2 Allcott, H., & Gentzkow, M. (2017). Social media and fake news in the 2016 election. *Journal of economic perspectives*, 31(2), 211-236.

Benkler, Y., Faris, R., & Roberts, H. (2018). *Network propaganda: Manipulation, disinformation, and radicalization in American politics*. Oxford University Press.

Dan, V., Paris, B., Donovan, J., Hameleers, M., Roozenbeek, J., van der Linden, S., & von Sikorski, C. (2021). Visual mis- and disinformation, social media, and democracy. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 98(3), 641-664.

Fowler, A., & Margolis, M. (2014). The political consequences of uninformed voters. *Electoral Studies*, 34, 100-110.

Garrett, R. K., & Weeks, B. E. (2017). Epistemic beliefs' role in promoting misperceptions and conspiracist ideation. *PloS one*, 12(9), e0184733.

Lewandowsky, S., & Van Der Linden, S. (2021). Countering misinformation and fake news through inoculation and prebunking. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 32(2), 348-384.

Marwick, A. E., & Partin, W. C. (2022). Constructing alternative facts: Populist expertise and the QAnon conspiracy. *New Media & Society*, 14614448221090201.

Shao, C., Hui, P. M., Wang, L., Jiang, X., Flammini, A., Menczer, F., & Ciampaglia, G. L. (2018). Anatomy of an online misinformation network. *PloS one*, 13(4), e0196087.

Waldman, A. E. (2017). The marketplace of fake news. *University of Pennsylvania Journal of Constitutional Law*, 20, 845.

- 3 Axt, J. R., Landau, M. J., & Kay, A. C. (2020). The psychological appeal of fake-news attributions. *Psychological science*, 31(7), 848-857.

Ribeiro, M. H., Calais, P. H., Almeida, V. A., & Meira Jr, W. (2017). "Everything I disagree with is# FakeNews": Correlating political polarization and spread of misinformation. *arXiv preprint arXiv:1706.05924*.

Lazer, D. M., Baum, M. A., Benkler, Y., Berinsky, A. J., Greenhill, K. M., Menczer, F., ... & Zittrain, J. L. (2018). The science of fake news. *Science*, 359(6380), 1094-1096.

Vargo, C. J., Guo, L., & Amazeen, M. A. (2018). The agenda-setting power of fake news: A big data analysis of the online media landscape from 2014 to 2016. *New media & society*, 20(5), 2028-2049.

Waldman, A. E. (2017). The marketplace of fake news. *University of Pennsylvania Journal of Constitutional Law*, 20, 845.

- 4 For the purposes of this brief, we define news as information about events and issues that involve more than just your friends or family.
- 5 To measure where people get their news, we asked respondents "From which of the following sources do you typically get news? By news we mean information about events and issues that involve more than just your friends or family. Select all that apply." The response options are "Television," "Radio," "Print publications, like newspapers and magazines," "News websites or apps," "Social media such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook or Instagram," "Podcasts."
- 6 To capture which radio programs people get news from, we asked respondents "What radio programs do you typically listen to?"

- 7 This report uses the following ethnoracial categories: "Latino" refers to any respondent who identifies as being of "Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin." "White" and "Black" refer to respondents who selected only those respective categories (and no other ethnoracial categories) and who do not identify as Latino. "Other" refers to respondents who do not identify as Latino and identify as "Asian or Asian-American," "American Indian or Alaska Native," "Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander" as well as people who did not identify with any of the ethnoracial categories provided on the questionnaire. "Mixed" refers to people who do not identify as Latino but who selected more than one ethnoracial category on the questionnaire.
- 8 To measure how often people get their news from various types of social media, we asked respondents "How often do you get news from each of the following sources? By news we mean information about events and issues that involve more than just your friends or family." The response options are "Never," "Rarely," "Sometimes," "Often."
- 9 To capture which YouTube channel people get their news from, we asked respondents "What shows, channels or people do you typically get news from on YouTube?"

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We are grateful for the generous support of the Knight Foundation, The Ballmer Group, and Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan. DMACS Waves 14, 16, and 17 were conducted in collaboration with, and supported by, Michigan CEAL: Communities Conquering COVID (MICEAL) (NIH grant 1 OT2 HL 156812). For more on Michigan CEAL please visit [www.michiganceal.org](http://www.michiganceal.org).

Yucheng Fan is the Data Manager of the Detroit Metro Area Communities Study.

Mara Cecilia Ostfeld is a faculty lead of the Detroit Metro Area Communities Study.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

---

For more information on DMACS, please contact  
Sharon Sand, DMACS project manager, at  
[slsand@umich.edu](mailto:slsand@umich.edu).

Learn more at [www.detroiturvey.umich.edu](http://www.detroiturvey.umich.edu)

---

Support for DMACS comes from the University of Michigan Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy, Institute for Social Research and Poverty Solutions. DMACS is also supported by the Knight Foundation.