



The Greater Montana Foundation benefits the people of Montana by encouraging communication, with an emphasis on the issues, trends and values of importance to present and future generations of Montanans.

Fact Sheet

Key findings, insights and trends from the 2019 News Media Preferences & Issues Survey

Montanans' following of the news:

More Montanans are paying closer attention to the news today than in 2015 and are most interested in local news coverage. Montanans reported greater interest in weather content and national and state politics.

Montanans who follow the news very or somewhat closely:

78% in 2019 | 72% in 2015

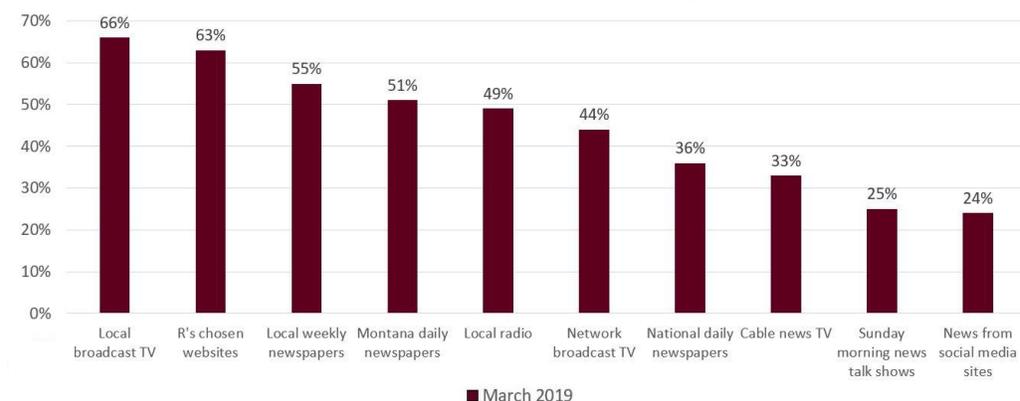
Internet news and information content of most interest to Montanans (respondents chose one or two options):

Local news — 48% (same in 2015) | Weather — 47% (31% in 2015) | National politics — 42% (31% in 2015) | State politics — 20% (17% in 2015) | International affairs — 17% (25% in 2015)

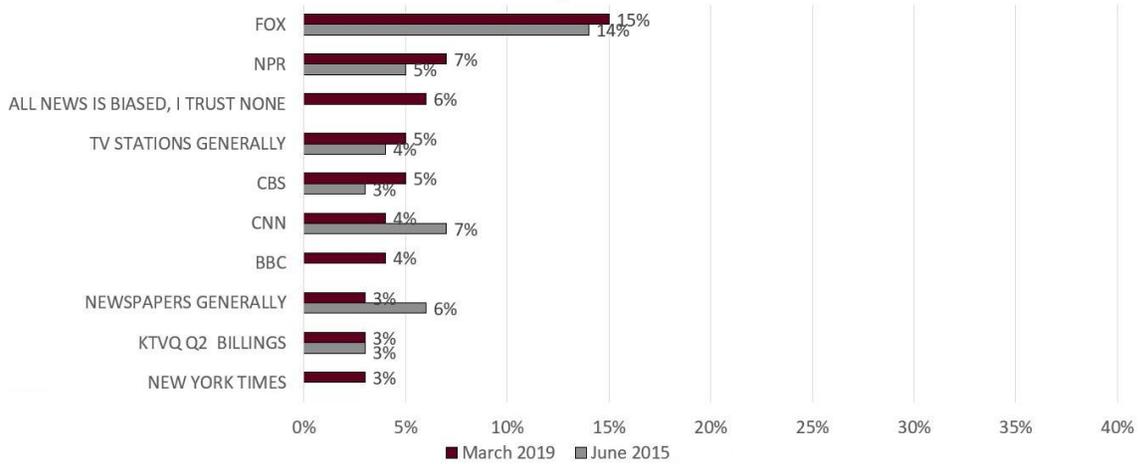
Montanans' viewpoints of media credibility:

Montanans find their local news sources and their chosen online news sources to be the most credible of all sources. Yet when asked what specific news sources they “trust” most, they rank FOX News highest (among 15% of respondents). NPR ranks second as a most-trusted news source, among 7% of respondents. And 6% of survey respondents voluntarily wrote in that they think all news is biased or not trusted.

Montanans' most credible news sources by category



Montanans' most trusted news sources (write-in survey response)



Demographics: Trusted news sources are sharply divided by political affiliation. Of those who wrote in FOX News as their most-trusted source, 97% identified as Republican; no Democrats identified FOX News as their most-trusted source. Montanans who wrote in CNN, CBS or NPR as their most-trusted source identified as Democrat. And 88% of Montanans listing CNN as their most-trusted source identified as Democrat. About one out of five Independents (18%) say all news is biased or not trusted.

Montanans' use of the internet and social media:

As Montanans' internet use continues to rise, Montanans are accessing news and information through the internet more than any other medium — with increasing use of mobile devices and social media networks.

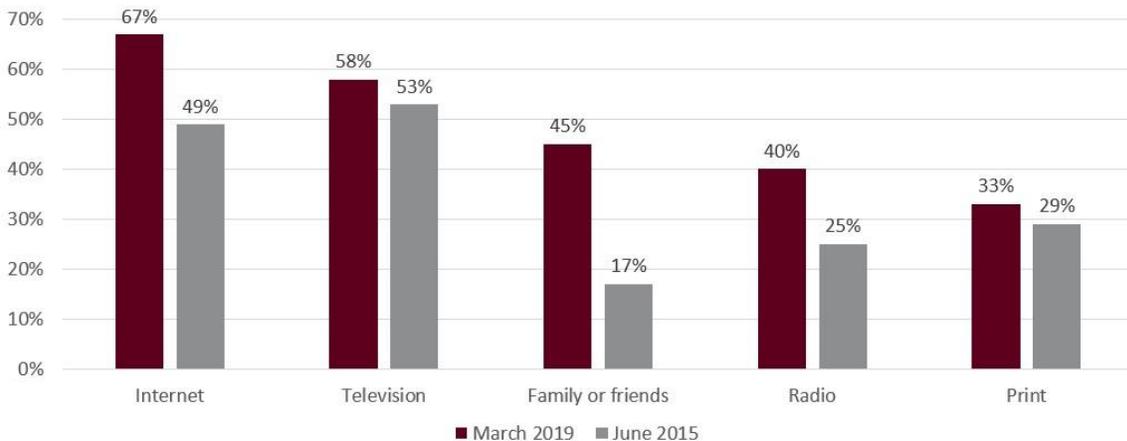
Percent of adults who use the internet:

93% in 2019 | 84% in 2016

Percent of adults who have internet access at home:

90% in 2019 | 87% in 2016 | 84% in 2015

The platforms Montanans source for most of their news (respondents could select more than one medium)



Percent who use a mobile device (smartphone or tablet) more than a computer to access news and information:

58% in 2019 | 44% in 2015

Percent who access a social media network daily:

76% in 2019 | 69% in 2015

Percent who use social media to access news and information:

47% in 2019 | 34% in 2015

Top social media networks for news and information:

Facebook — 40% | Instagram — 10% | Twitter — 10%

Demographics: More than three-quarters (77%) of adults ages 18 – 34 use online news sources at least several times per week, compared to just 27% of seniors, ages 65 and older. Forty-four percent of adults with a high school degree or less use online sources multiple times per week, compared to 70% of those with some college and/or technical or vocational school.

Montanans' use of traditional news sources:

Attributed to the proliferation of available news sources, primarily online sources and social media, Montanans' consumption of Montana newspapers and TV news has declined. More Montanans are using the radio as an information source but for less time than they did three years ago.

Adults who watch TV news regularly:

Local news — 35% (41% in 2015) | Broadcast network news — 24% (31% in 2015) | Cable news — 19% (23% in 2015)

Percent who listened to the radio the day before answering the survey:

36% listened up to 1 hour (20% in 2015) | 29% listened for 1 or more hours (42% in 2015)

Percent who regularly read a Montana daily newspaper:

25% in 2019 | 36% in 2015

Percent who regularly read a weekly community newspaper:

21% in 2019 | 33% in 2015

Demographics: Montana females ages 50 or older are more likely to report watching TV news regularly or sometimes (72%) than females ages 18 – 49 (36%). Similarly, Montana males ages 50 and older are more likely to report watching TV news regularly or sometimes (56%) than are males ages 18 – 49 (17%). Montanans ages 18 – 49 are more likely to say they listen to the radio at least 15 minutes a day (60%) than are Montanans ages 50 or older (47%). Montanans ages 50 or older are more likely to report reading a Montana daily newspaper regularly or sometimes (54%) than are younger (18-49) Montanans (41%).

Montanans' news-sharing practices:

Among their regular sources of news, more Montanans are receiving news from friends and family than in 2015 (graph page 2 bottom). And those sharing news items on the internet (41% of Montanans) are increasingly emailing and posting information to influence others.

Percent of Montanans receiving news regularly from friends and family:

45% in 2019 | 17% in 2015

Percent of those sharing on the internet who aim to influence others:

63% in 2019 | 43% in 2015

Demographics: Montana females ages 18 – 49 are more likely to report sharing a news item to educate or influence others (56%) than females ages 50 or older (18%). Montana males ages 18 – 49 are also more likely to report sharing a news item to educate or influence others (32%) than males ages 50 or older (15%). More Democrats said they share a news item to educate or influence others (37%) than Republicans (27%).

Issues of importance to Montanans:

The top issues concerning Montanans have shifted slightly over the last three years. Jobs and the economy, health care and education remain in the top five. Spending and state taxes, along with drugs rose to the top five.

Top five in 2019 survey:

Jobs and the economy
Health care
Spending and state taxes
Drugs*
Education

Top five in 2015 and 2016 surveys:

Jobs and the economy
Education
Health care
Moral values
Energy and resource development

* Due to the awareness of drugs as a growing regional and national concern, the Greater Montana Foundation and UM Bureau of Business and Economic Research added “drugs” to the list of issue topics presented to survey respondents in the 2019 survey.

Demographics: Montanans ages 50 or older are more likely to rate health care as the most important issue (21%) than younger Montanans (10%). Across all age groups, males are more likely to rate spending and state taxes as the most important issue (20%) than females (8%).

Methodology: The 2019 Sources of News Survey was commissioned by the Greater Montana Foundation and conducted and analyzed by the University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research with analytical assistance from Public Opinion Strategies, a national public opinion research firm. BBER used leading-edge random, address-based sampling of Montana residents, administering survey questions by mail and internet. A total of 579 adults completed the survey in March 2019. The results have a sampling error rate of +/- 4 percent.