



ENGAGING PASSIVE NEWS CONSUMERS

**In a media consumption
landscape that's changed
dramatically,
A CENTRAL DYNAMIC
CANNOT BE IGNORED**

Which of the following best describes how you get news about things like current events and politics?

America has two types of news consumers; **ACTIVE** and **PASSIVE**.



navigator.*

Source: 12,000 interviews among registered voters nationwide, conducted by GSG and Navigator Research in 2025.

Understanding passive news consumption is critical to how communicators reach and influence audiences going forward.

Two Types of News Consumers.

Active consumers seek out news and build routines around it. Passive consumers encounter news as they scroll and consume less overall.

Less Engaged, Less Likely to Verify.

Passive audiences are less invested in political debates and less likely to fact-check what they see — leaving them more vulnerable to misinformation.

How They Decide What to Trust.

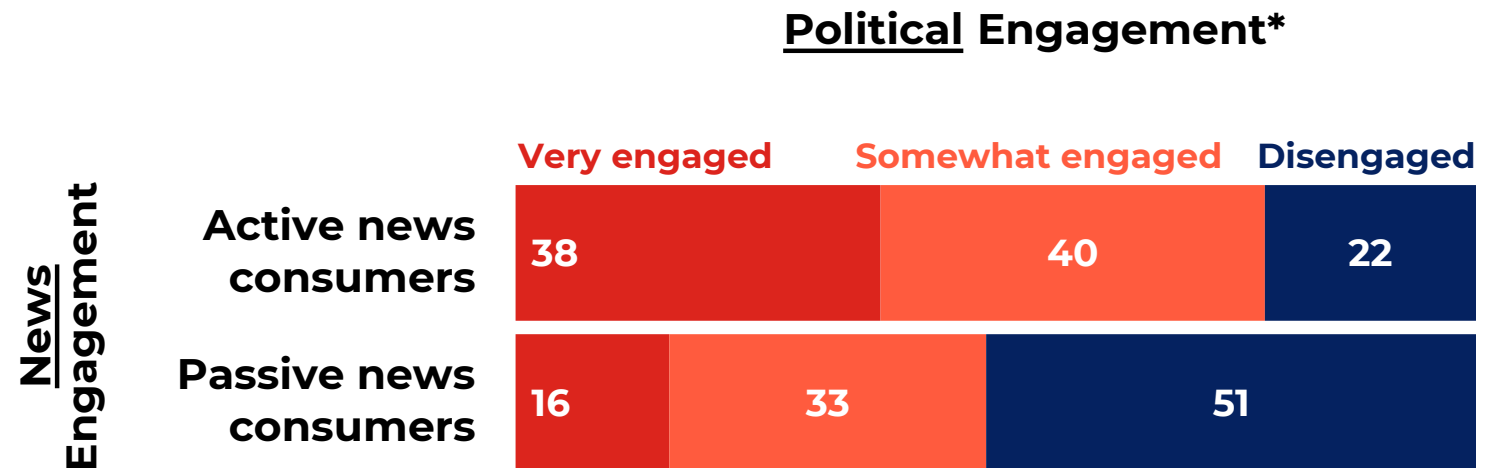
All news consumers rely on key cues — like who's behind an account and where it's posted — but an authentic *feel* matters just as much.

The Stakes — and the Opportunity.

As more people rely on passive, algorithm-driven news habits, communicators must adapt strategies to reach audiences who are primed to be less responsive to traditional messaging.

Passive news audiences are also **MUCH LESS ENGAGED** with politics in general

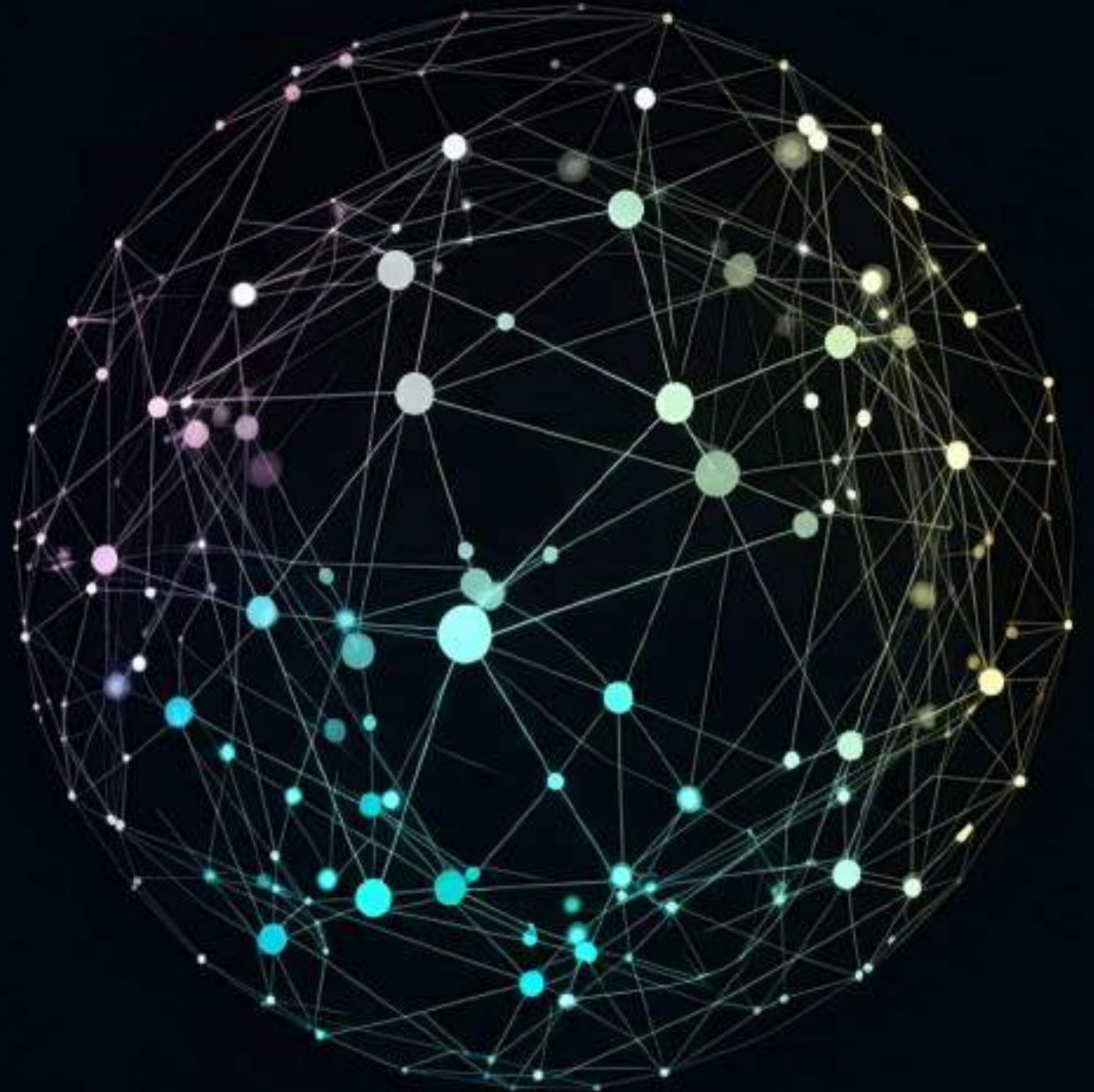
News Engagement and Political Engagement



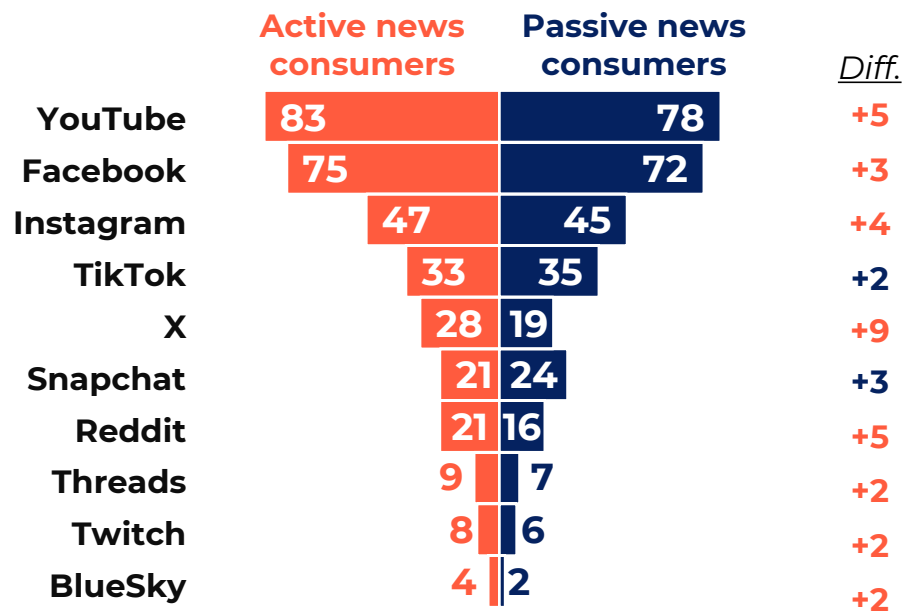
*Political Engagement based on question "How important is politics to your personal identity? Very important, Somewhat important, Not that important, or Not at all important."

While social media use
among passive and active
news consumers is
generally similar –

**PASSIVES
CONSUME
MUCH LESS
ONLINE NEWS
OVERALL**

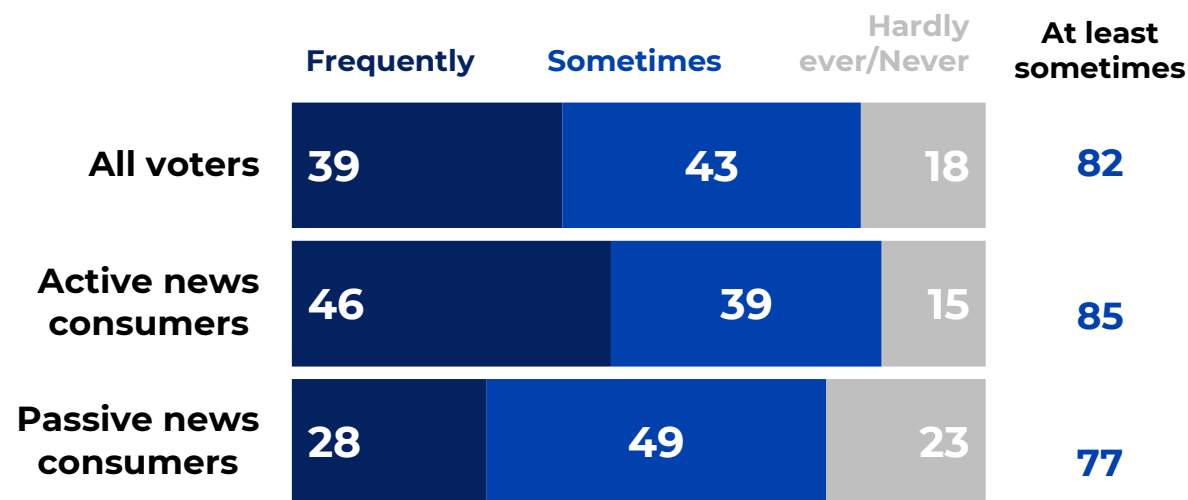


Weekly use of SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS*



X, at least, is unique in how much its audience skews especially towards active news consumers. TikTok meanwhile, draws passive consumers disproportionately.

FREQUENCY of getting information on current events and politics from social media or online sources**



Lower news uptake among passive consumers may be a sign algorithms are deprioritizing that kind of content for those users.

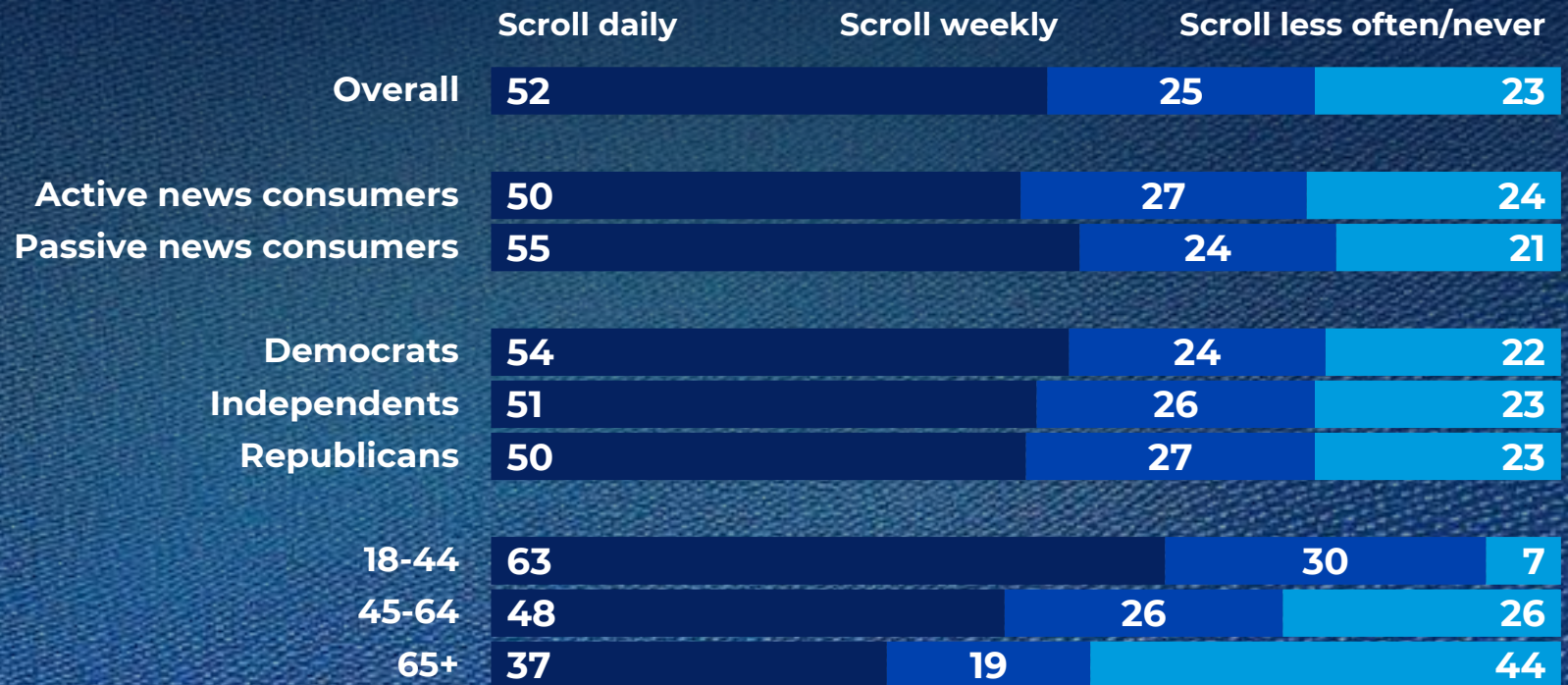
News Consumption Habits



ACTIVE NEWS CONSUMERS BUILD ROUTINES around news consumption while PASSIVES JUST SCROLL

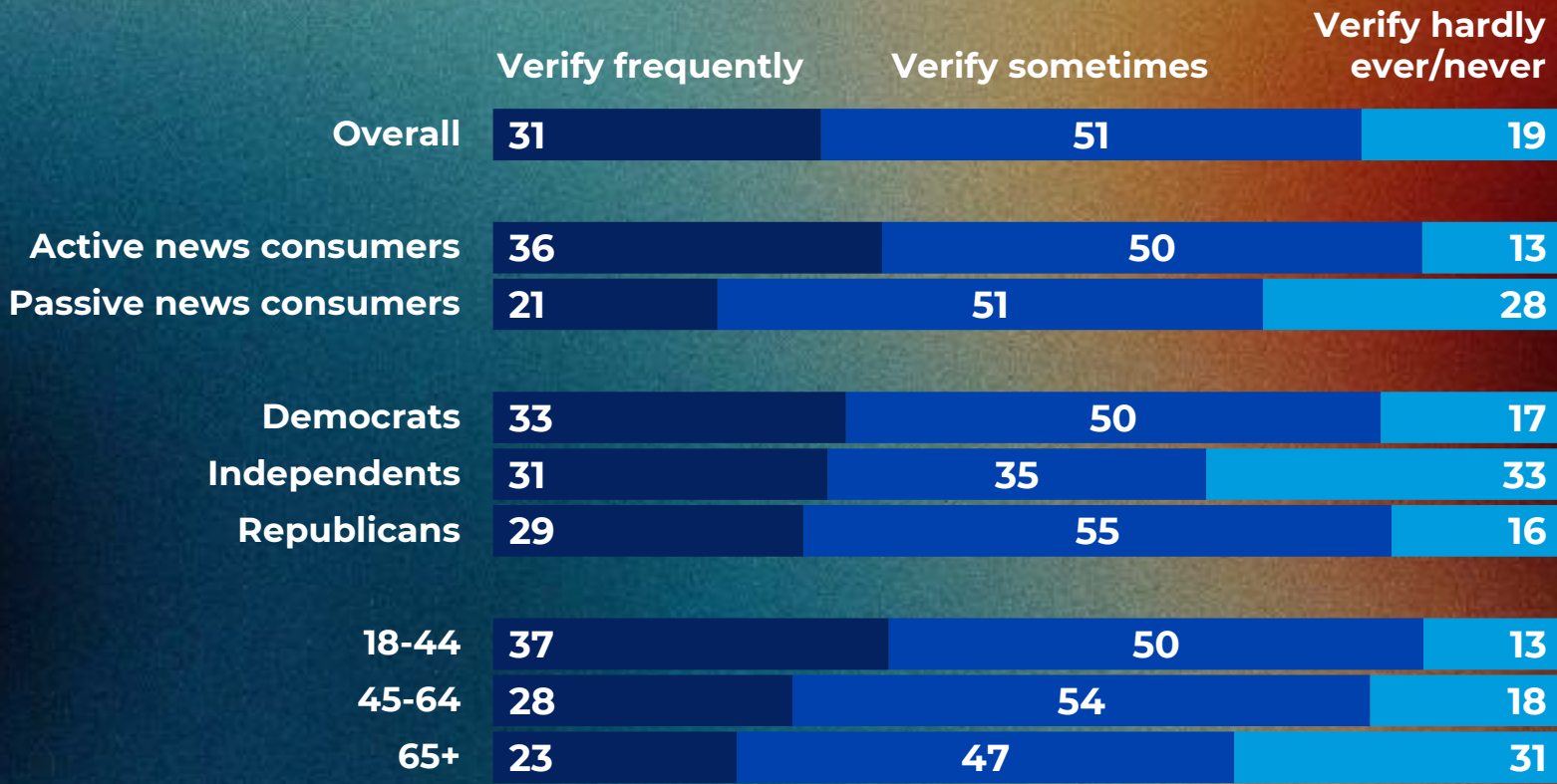
ALGORITHMS ARE THE DEFAULT – passive or active, news consumer preferences are reinforced by recommended content

Among social media users: Frequency of scrolling through algorithm-driven content on social media



Active news consumers are more likely to **VERIFY** INFORMATION they come across online

Frequency of immediately **verifying information** on current events/politics from social media or online sources*



*Excludes respondents who “never” get news from online or social media sources.

TRUST SIGNALS THAT

WORK:

affiliation, platform,
fact-check labels,
and supportive
comments

How often each is **very useful** when deciding what information to trust on social media

All	Active news consumers	Passive news consumers	
75	77	72	Instinct – the way they write or talk feels trustworthy or not
75	78	70	Affiliation, e.g. with a news organization, academic institution, or advocacy org
73	74	72	Where it is posted (which social media platform)
71	73	69	Fact-checking labels or warnings from the social media company
69	69	68	Comments responding to the post
65	69	57	Affiliation with a political party, political candidate, or political point of view
55	57	52	Likes or reposts on the post
55	55	53	The age of the person making the post (whether they are older or younger)
55	54	55	Whether any of your friends follow the person or account too
46	48	44	Number of followers of the person or account

INSTINCT AND CONTEXT MATTERS MORE THAN SOCIAL PROOF OR SCALE

**For communicators, building trust depends less on
amplification and more on aligning with the environments
and signals audiences already trust**

Key takeaways

Authenticity matters.

People trust voices that *feel* genuine—those that speak with clarity, relatability, and a clear point of view. Whether it's a spokesperson, creator, or brand channel, tone and delivery often outweigh credentials. Keep messaging human and conversational rather than overly polished or corporate.

Use trusted sources to validate messages.

Traditional trust cues—news outlets, independent fact-checkers, institutional affiliations—still shape credibility. Pair campaign messages with validation from reliable entities (e.g., earned media coverage or visible fact-checking labels) to strengthen legitimacy.

Platforms provide a safe space.

Trust travels with comfort. Content appearing on familiar platforms gains implicit credibility. Meet audiences where they are—YouTube, Instagram, TikTok—and tailor creative to each platform's tone and norms rather than forcing uniformity.

Peer validation isn't what it's cracked up to be.

Likes, shares, or mutual follows matter less than tone or context. Most users trust their own instincts over social proof. Focus less on engagement metrics and more on message clarity and presentation within credible environments.

Don't sweat the follower size.

Large followings don't equal trust. Smaller, niche creators or local messengers often feel more believable. Diversify partnerships—work with credible micro-influencers or trusted community figures, not just high-reach accounts.

THANK YOU

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Methodology: Global Strategy Group conducted an online panel survey of 1,004 registered voters nationwide between September 2 - September 7, 2025. The confidence interval at the 95% confidence level is +/-3.1%. The confidence interval on sub-samples is greater. GSG and Navigator Research also conducted a series of online panel surveys among 12,000 registered voters nationwide over the course of 2025.