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THE CIVIC HEALTH AND INSTITUTIONS PROJECT: A 50-STATE SURVEY REPORT #113: 2024 US ELECTIONS: SOURCES OF NEWS AND INFORMATION

USA, November 2024

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HARVARD Kennedy School
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ROCHESTER



THE CIVIC HEALTH AND INSTITUTIONS PROJECT

Report of November 4, 2024, v.1

The Civic Health and Institutions Project

and

The COVID States Project

A joint initiative of:

Northeastern University,

Harvard University,

Rutgers University,

University of Rochester

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Note on methods:

Between August 30, 2024, and October 8, 2024, we collected a total of 25,518 responses from individuals age 18 and older across all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. The surveys were conducted by PureSpectrum via an online, nonprobability sample, with state-level representative quotas for race/ethnicity, age, and gender (for more details, see chip50.org and covidstates.org). In addition to balancing on these dimensions, we reweighted our data using demographic characteristics to match the U.S. population with respect to 2020 vote choice and turnout, race/ethnicity, age, gender, education, and living in urban, suburban, or rural areas. This was the latest in a series of surveys we have been conducting since April 2020, examining attitudes and behaviors in the United States.

More information on methodology is available at [www\(chip50.org/survey-methodology](http://www(chip50.org/survey-methodology).

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Or visit us at [www\(chip50.org](http://www(chip50.org) or www.covidstates.org.

2024 US Elections: Sources of news and information

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Friends and family (29%) and news media (26%) are the top sources Americans use for voting information, with younger people (18-24) leaning more on personal networks, and the older population (65+) favoring news media.
- Americans with less formal education tend to rely more on friends and family for election information, while those with higher education and income are more likely to prefer the news media.
- Democrats and Independents are more likely to rely on news media (29%), whereas Republicans more often get information from friends and family (34%).
- Local media serve as the main election information source for 8% of Americans, while national media are preferred by 17%. Three quarters of Americans identify sources other than the news media as their main way of staying informed about the 2024 election.
- Older Americans, as well as those with lower income and education, are most likely to rely primarily on local news for 2024 election information.
- Across US states, the reliance on national news for election information is highest in Connecticut (26%), Massachusetts (26%), and Nevada (25%), while the states where people are most likely to rely on local news are Hawaii (14%), Louisiana (13%), and South Carolina (12%).
- Only 25% of Americans report being very or extremely satisfied with local political news, with satisfaction levels relatively higher among Black respondents (35%), Democrats (38%), and people living in urban areas (33%).
- Americans with higher income and formal education levels are more likely to report being satisfied with local political news.
- DC (48%), New York (42%), North Carolina (33%), Pennsylvania (33%), Michigan (31%), and Illinois (30%) reported highest satisfaction with local news about politics (percent respondents saying they were “very” or “extremely” satisfied).
- Conversely, Montana (50%), Idaho (49%), Wyoming (45%), New Mexico (45%), and New Hampshire (40%) were most dissatisfied with local news (percent respondents saying they were “not too satisfied” or “not at all satisfied”).

Introduction

Recent decades have brought about profound changes in the landscape of news consumption in the US. Today, Americans navigate a complex media environment shaped by digital content, social media, and increasingly polarized news outlets. While people use a wide variety of ways to stay informed, the sources they turn to vary significantly depending on location, age, education, income, and political alignment. These differences are especially relevant during elections, when voters' choices are influenced not only by candidates and issues, but also by the accessibility and perceived credibility of information sources.

This report explores the primary sources Americans use to inform their voting decisions for the 2024 election, highlighting trends across demographics and ideological backgrounds. We find significant divides across social groups, with younger people and those with less formal education relying more on personal and social networks, while older, higher-income, and more educated Americans turn toward traditional media outlets. These findings raise important questions about the role of local and national media in shaping democratic participation.

While this report offers insights into the sources Americans use for election information, it does not explore *why* people may choose or avoid certain types of news. In the case of local media, for example, it remains unclear whether its limited use reflects personal preference or is the result of restricted access. The decline of local media and the rise of news deserts across the US mean that for many Americans, local news simply may not be available.

In our recent survey, conducted in September-October 2024, we asked respondents about the most important source of information they relied on when making a decision about voting in 2024. Answers covered a range of options, from discussion with friends and family, through party nominations, to endorsements by unions, celebrities, or clergy. Respondents could only select one answer from the list. Those who said their primary source of information was "news stories" were then asked to identify which source of news was most important to them for election information -- local and national TV, websites, print, or radio. Here again they could only select one top choice. We present breakdowns of these survey responses in the following sections.

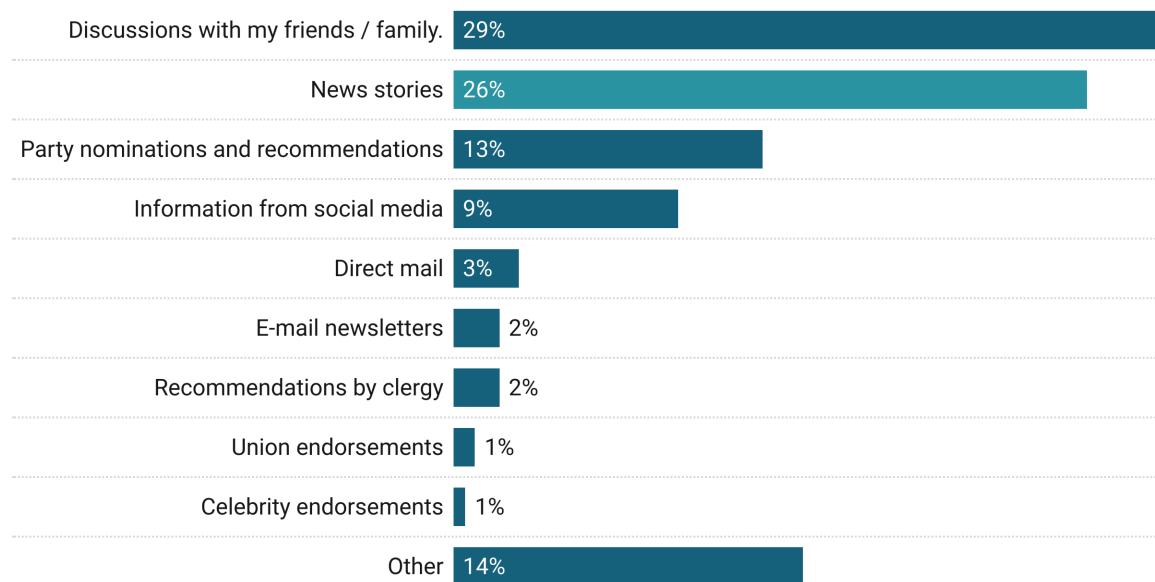
Sources of information about the 2024 election

Friends and family (29%) and news media (26%) were the most frequently cited primary sources of information for voting decisions, while party nominations (13%) and social media (9%) played a lesser role. Younger Americans (ages 18-24) relied more heavily on friends and family (38%), whereas older respondents (65 and over) preferred news media (39%), reflecting generational differences in information consumption. Important to note, considerably more young people relied on news media (17%) compared to those who mainly paid attention to party nominations (9%).

Social media was more important for young people (14%) compared to those over 65 (5%). Conversely, the importance of party nominations increased with age. People with less formal education relied more on friends and family (32%), while those with higher degrees leaned more towards news media (30%). Democrats and Independents were more likely to rely on news media (29% vs 24% for Republicans), while Republicans more often pointed to friends and family (34% vs 27% for Democrats).

Primary sources of election information in 2024

When making a decision about voting, including candidates for office and ballot initiatives, what is your most important source of information?



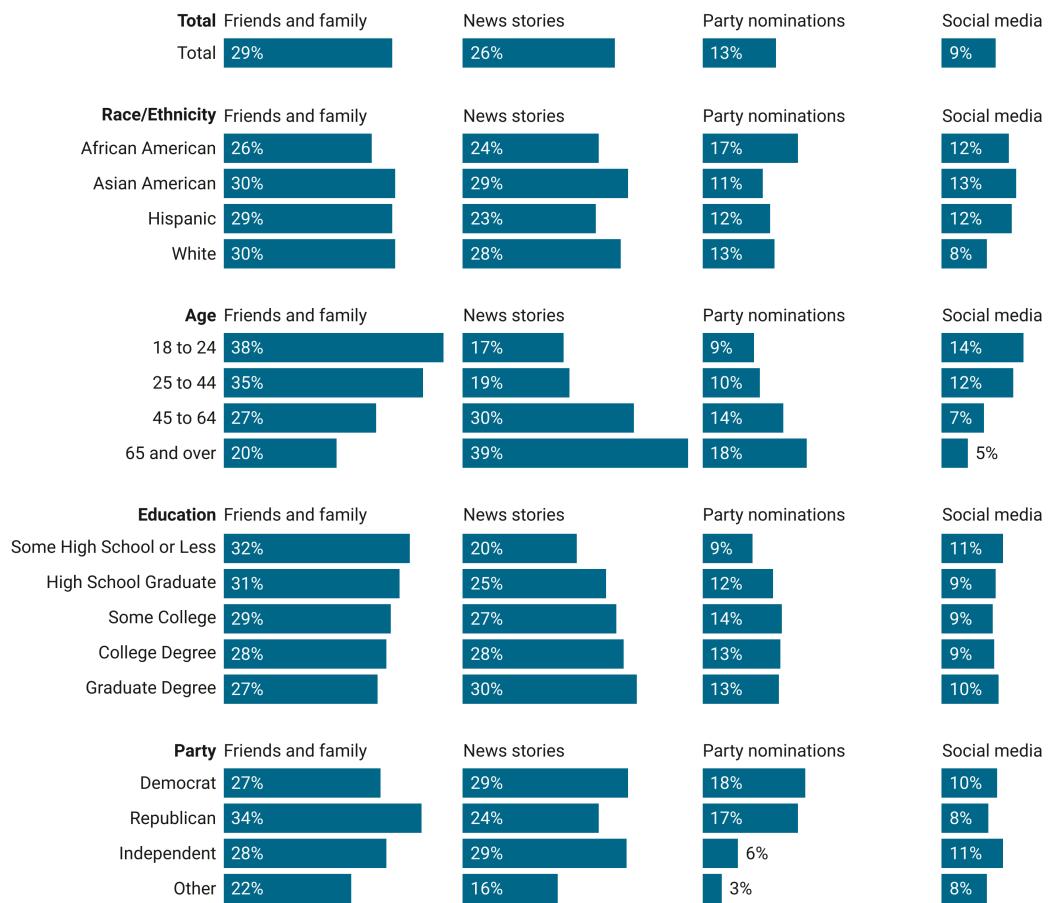
National sample, N = 25,518, Time period: 08/30/2024-10/08/2024

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (chip50.org)

Figure 1.

Most important sources of information when making a decision about voting

When making a decision about voting, including candidates for office and ballot initiatives, what is your most important source of information? [Percent respondents who select each choice]



National sample, N = 25,518, Time period: 08/30/2024-10/08/2024

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (chip50.org)

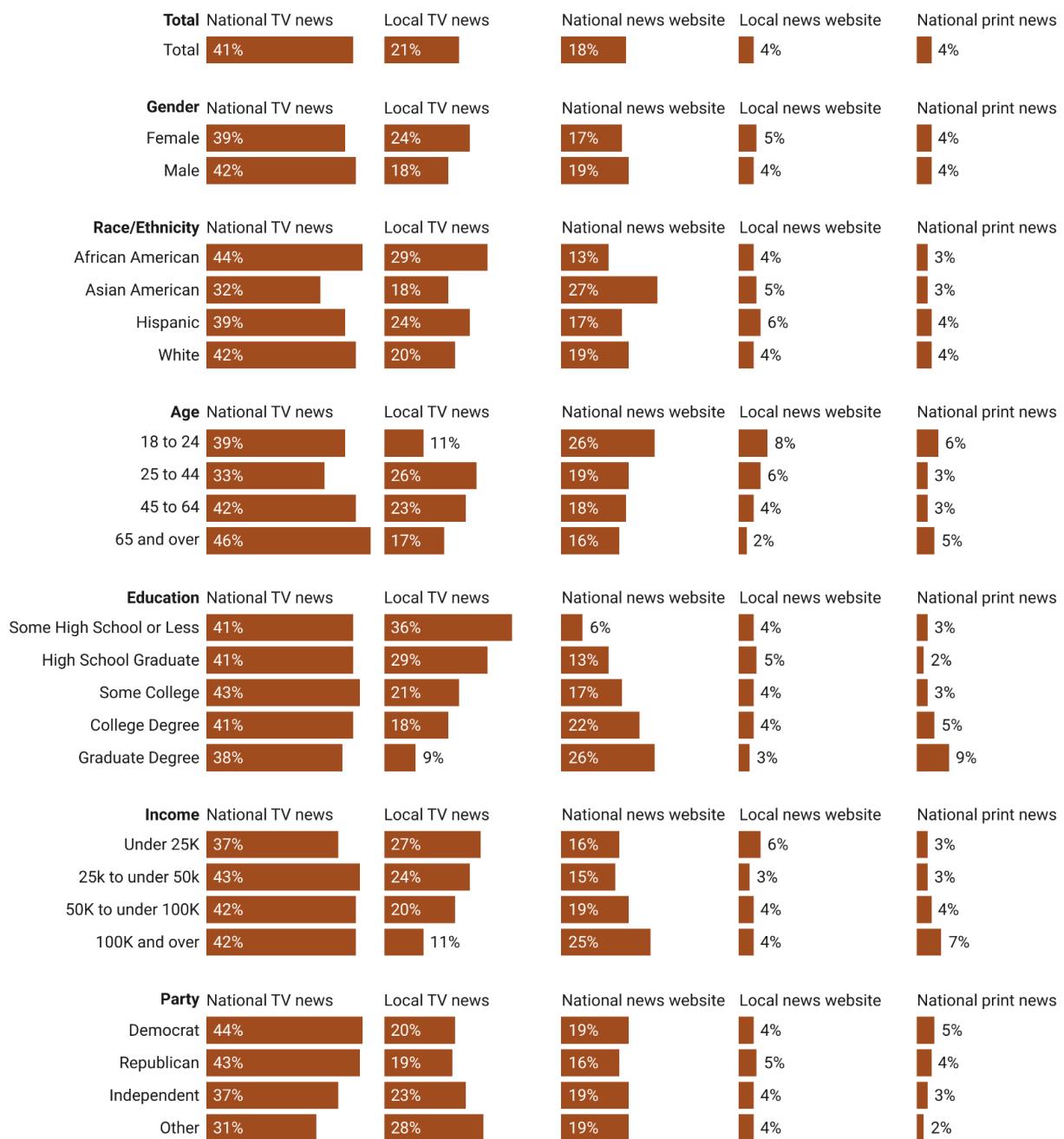
Figure 2. (Note that this figure only includes the information sources selected by more than 3% of respondents who answered this question)

For respondents who did rely on news stories for election information, national TV news emerged as the leading source (41%), followed by local TV news (21%) and national news websites (18%). There were distinct differences among demographic groups: Black Americans had a higher reliance on national TV news (44%), whereas Asian Americans were more likely than other groups to select national news websites as a primary source of election information (27%).

Older Americans (65 and over) also favored national TV news (46%), suggesting a continued trust in traditional broadcast media among that generation. Education level was also linked to news consumption, with graduate degree holders more likely to turn to national news websites (26%). Similarly, income levels came with different news preferences, with those earning \$100,000 or more relying more on national news websites (25%).

Most important sources of news when making a decision about voting

Which source of news stories is most important to you when it comes to making a decision about voting?
 [Percent among respondents who selected "News stories" as their top election information choice]

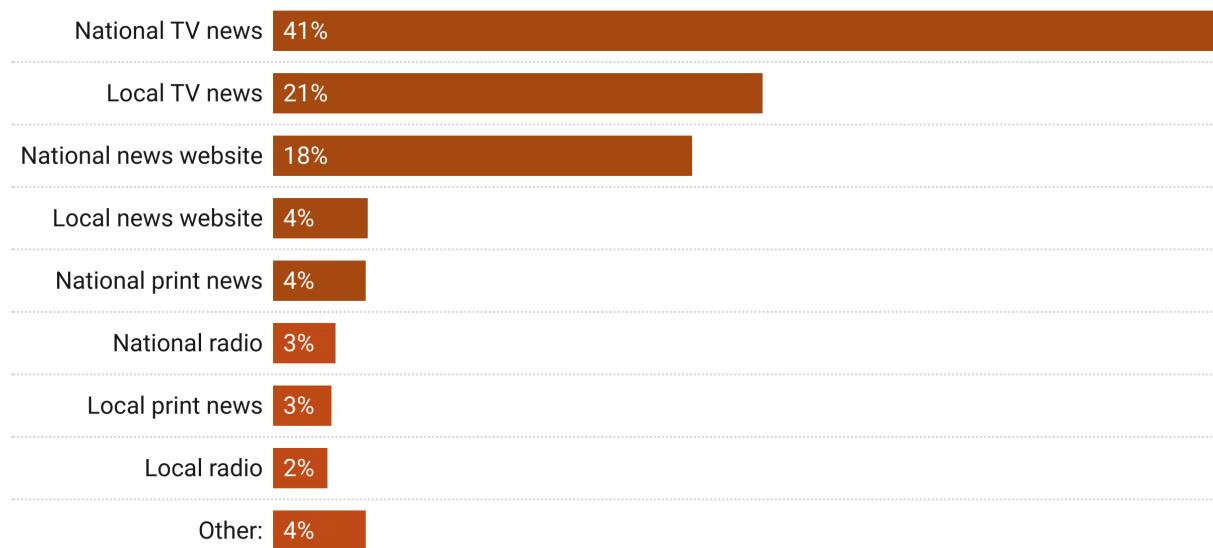


National sample N = 6,641 (respondents listing news stories as the most important source of election information), Time period: 08/30/2024-10/08/2024
 Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (chip50.org)

Figure 3. (Note that this figure only includes the information sources selected by more than 3% of respondents who answered this question)

Most important sources of election news in 2024

Which source of news stories is most important to you when it comes to making a decision about voting? [Percent among respondents who selected "News stories" as their top election information choice]



*National sample N = 6,641 (respondents listing news stories as the most important source of election information),
Time period: 08/30/2024-10/08/2024*

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (chip50.org)

Figure 4.

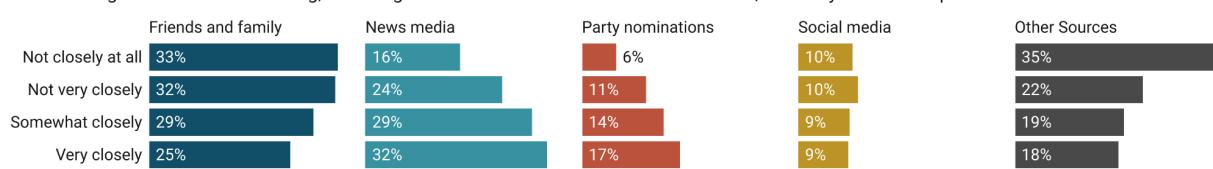
Americans with different levels of interest in following politics also differ in the sources they use to inform their voting decisions (see Fig. 5). Among those following politics "very closely," news media was the top source (32%), followed by friends and family (25%).

On the other hand, respondents following politics "not closely at all" predominantly relied on friends and family (33%) or other sources (35%).

Primary source of election information by interest in political news

How closely do you follow news and information about politics and current affairs?

When making a decision about voting, including candidates for office and ballot initiatives, what is your most important source of information?



National sample, N = 25,518, Time period: 08/30/2024-10/08/2024

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (chip50.org)

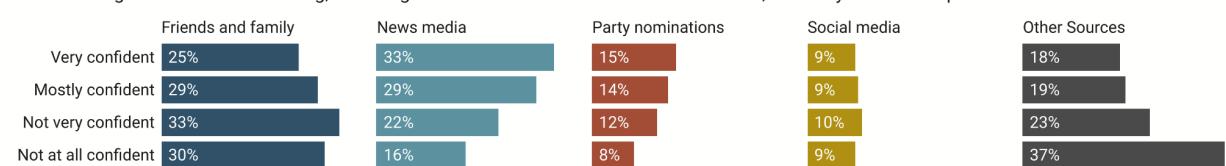
Figure 5.

Different levels of confidence in the fairness of the 2024 election were also associated with different primary information sources (see Fig. 6). Those who were "very confident" in the election being fair were most likely to rely on news media as a primary source: 33% said so, compared to 16% of those with the least confidence in election fairness. At the same time, those who believed most in the fairness of the 2024 election were the least likely to rely primarily on friends and family (25%) and other sources (18%). They were also more likely to cite party nominations as their primary source of information, at 15% compared to 8% among those who had no confidence at all in the election's fairness.

Primary source of election information by trust in the fairness of the 2024 election

How confident are you that the 2024 presidential election will be fairly conducted?

When making a decision about voting, including candidates for office and ballot initiatives, what is your most important source of information?



National sample, N = 25,518, Time period: 08/30/2024-10/08/2024

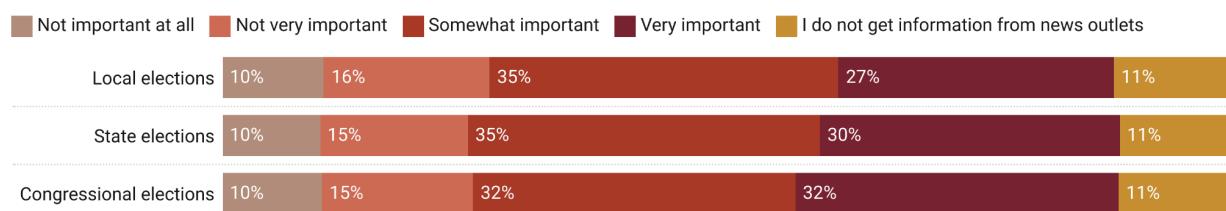
Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (chip50.org)

Figure 6.

A quarter to a third of Americans considered information obtained from the news media to be very important for their decision how to vote in different elections. In total, 27% of respondents said that news was very important for their vote in local elections, 30% for state elections, and 32% for congressional elections. At the same time, a consistent 11% of respondents reported that they do not get information from news outlets for their voting decisions, indicating a gap in the reliance on traditional news media.

Importance of news media for voting decisions in the United States

How important is the information you get from news outlets for your decision how to vote in local, state, and congressional elections? [Percent respondents selecting each answer option]



National sample, N = 25,518, Time period: 08/30/2024-10/08/2024

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (chip50.org)

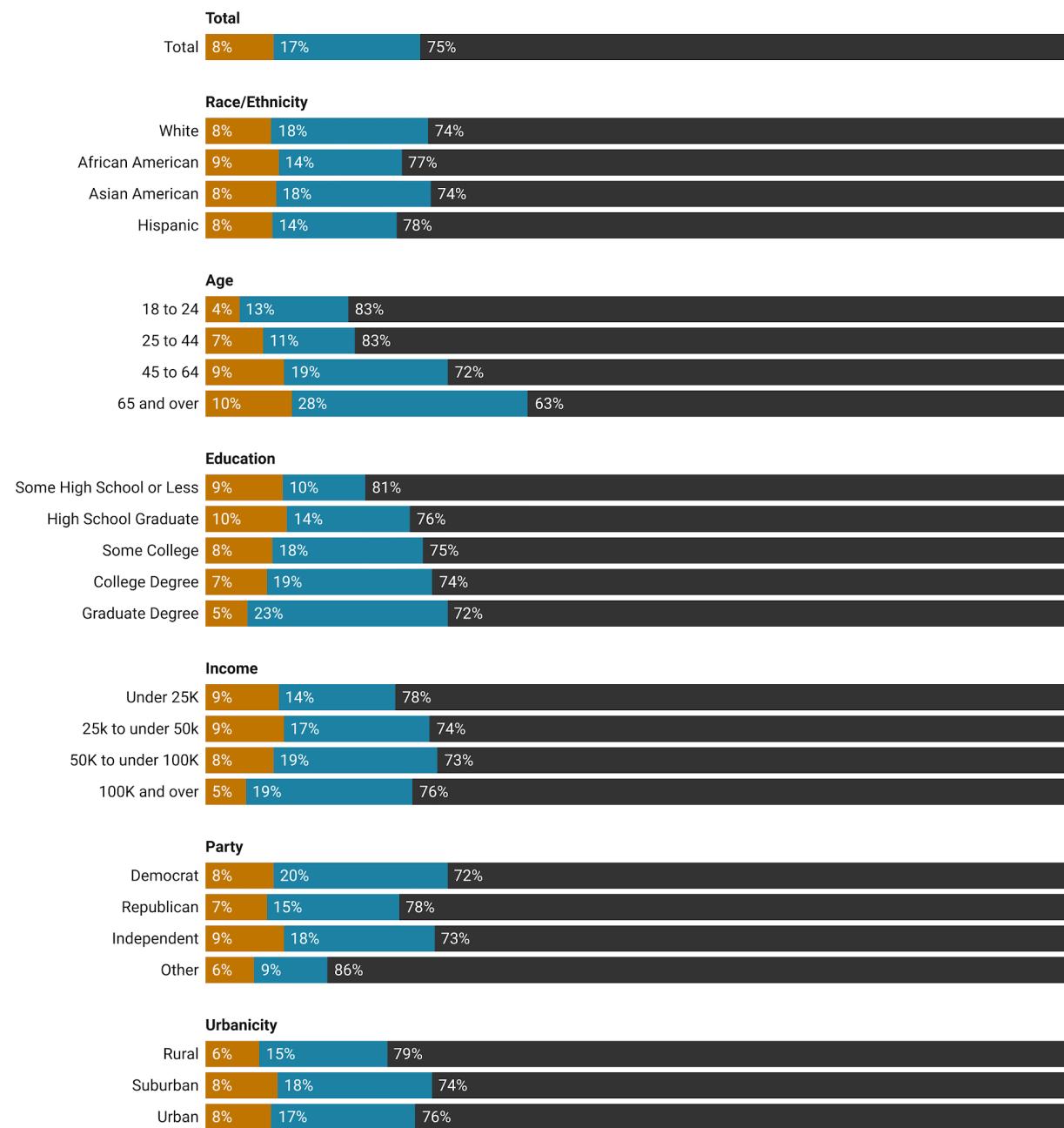
Figure 7.

Who relies on local and national news for vote choice?

Local and national news as a source of election information in 2024

When making a decision about voting, including candidates for office and ballot initiatives, what is your most important source of information? / Which source of news stories is most important to you when it comes to making a decision about voting?
[Combined responses from both questions]

Local News National News Not a news media



National sample, N = 25,518, Time period: 08/30/2024-10/08/2024

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (chip50.org)

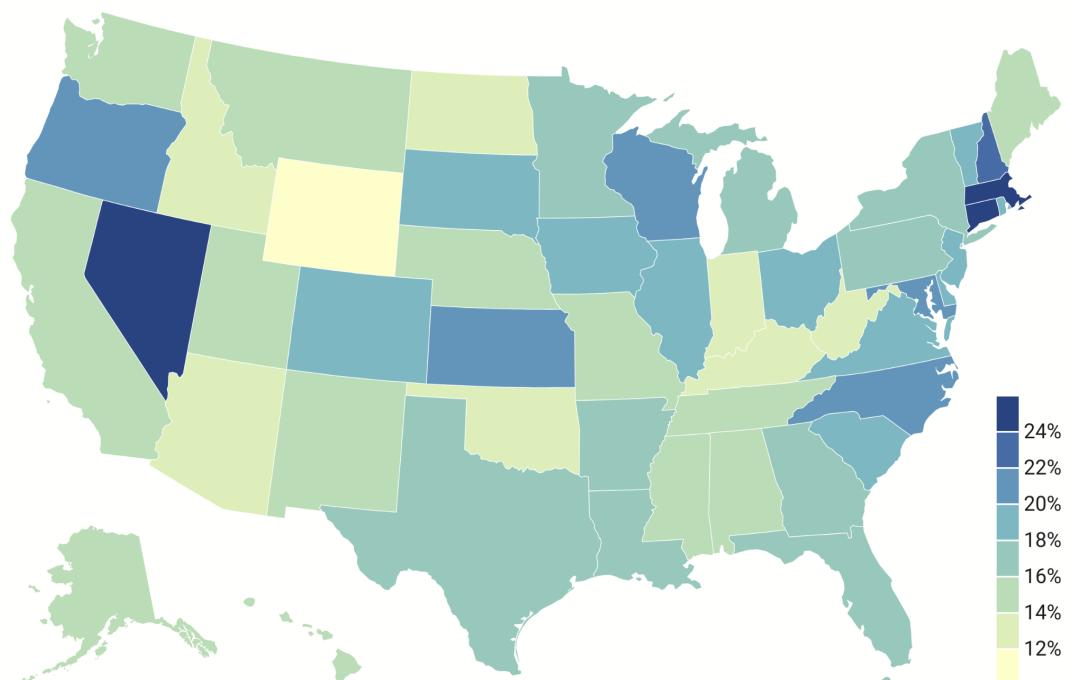
Figure 8.

To examine the role played by different source types, we combined the relevant local and national news outlet categories selected by our respondents. Overall, local media was the main source of election information for 8% of Americans, while 17% cited national media as their primary source. Younger Americans were least likely to select local media (4%), while those over 65 were most likely to use either local (10%) or national news (28%) as a primary source.

Importantly, respondents with lower education and income were more likely to rely on local news, whereas reliance on national news increased with higher socioeconomic status. In statistical models controlling for multiple demographic and political factors¹, the most important correlates of reliance on local news were higher age, lower education, and income, and living in an urban or suburban area.

Reliance on national news for election information by state

When making a decision about voting, including candidates for office and ballot initiatives, what is your most important source of information? / Which source of news stories is most important to you when it comes to making a decision about voting? [Combined responses from both questions]



National sample, N = 25,518, Time period: 08/30/2024-10/08/2024

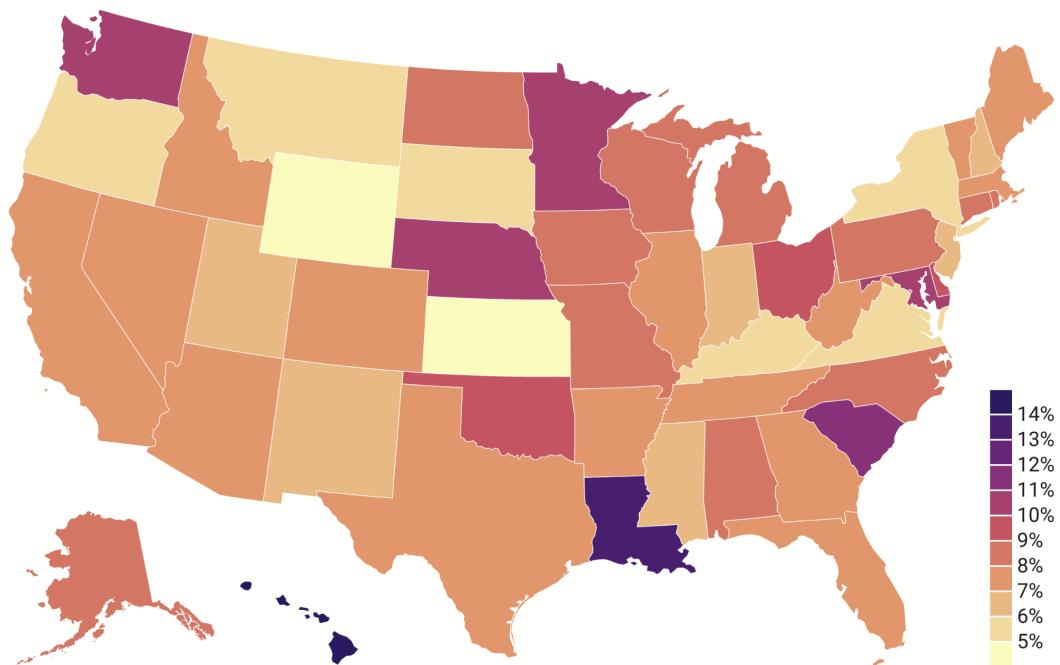
Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (chip50.org)

Figure 9.

¹ Logistic regression models with local news as the outcome and controls for demographics, geography, partisanship, ideology, and political interest.

Reliance on local news for election information by state

When making a decision about voting, including candidates for office and ballot initiatives, what is your most important source of information? / Which source of news stories is most important to you when it comes to making a decision about voting? [Combined responses from both questions]



National sample, N = 25,518, Time period: 08/30/2024-10/08/2024

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (chip50.org)

Figure 10.

Across US states, the reliance on national news for election information was highest in Connecticut (26%), Massachusetts (26%), and Nevada (25%), while the states where people were most likely to rely on local news were Hawaii (14%), Louisiana (13%), and South Carolina (12%).

Satisfaction with the quality of local political news

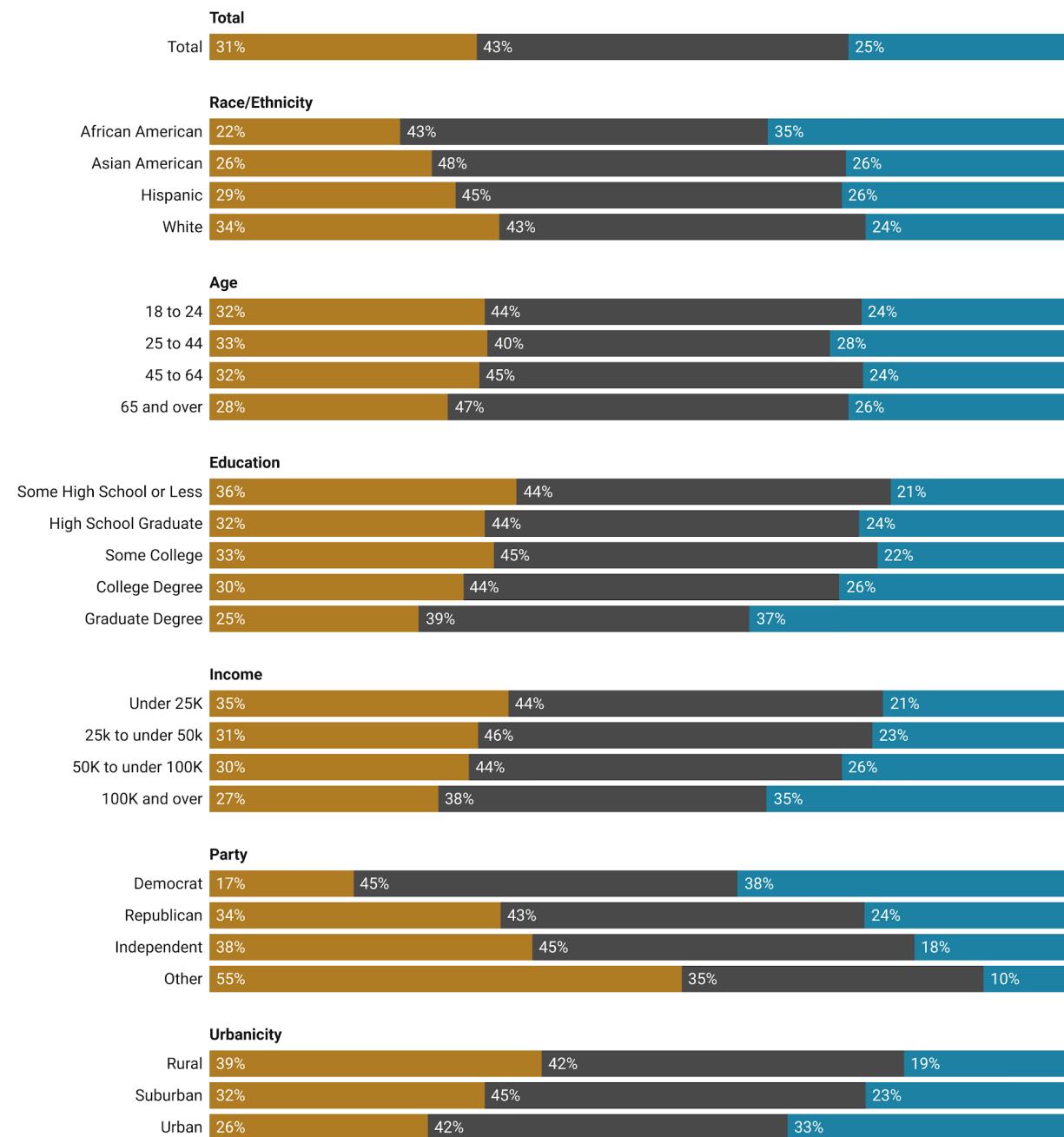
Overall, 31% of respondents reported that they were not at all/not too satisfied with the quality of local news about politics, while 25% were very/extremely satisfied. Black respondents were most likely to report satisfaction with local news (35% very/extremely satisfied), whereas White respondents had the lowest satisfaction levels (24% very/extremely satisfied). Political party affiliation also was related to satisfaction levels, with 38% of Democrats reporting they were very/extremely satisfied, compared to 24% of Republicans, 18% of Independents, and 10% of those with other affiliations. Urban residents also reported higher satisfaction (33% very/extremely satisfied) compared to

rural residents (19%). Americans with higher income and formal education levels were more likely to report being satisfied with local political news.

Satisfaction with the quality of local news about politics

How satisfied are you with the quality of news you get about local government and local politics?
[Percent of respondents who selected each answer option]





National sample, N = 25,518, Time period: 08/30/2024-10/08/2024

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (chip50.org)

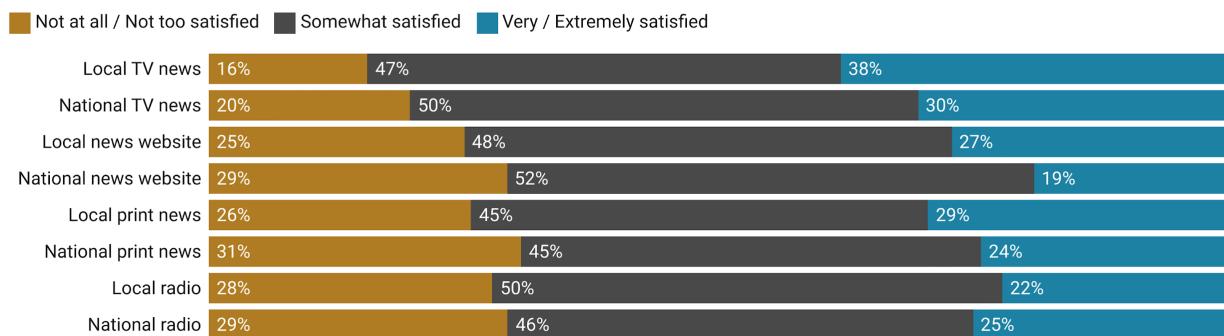
Figure 11.

We also examined what predicts satisfaction with local news while accounting for multiple relevant demographic and political factors². Party, ideology, and living in an urban area emerged as the strongest predictors in these models.

Among Americans who got their election information from the media, viewers of local news were most likely to be very or extremely satisfied (38%), followed by viewers of national TV news (30%) and local print news (29%). Those who relied on national news websites (19%) and local radio (22%) were least likely to say they were very or extremely satisfied.

Satisfaction with local news quality by top preferred media choice

How satisfied are you with the quality of news you get about local government and local politics?
Which source of news stories is most important to you when it comes to making a decision about voting?
(Asked to respondents who said "News stories" were their most important source of election information)



National sample N = 6,641 (respondents listing news stories as the most important source of election information), Time period: 08/30/2024-10/08/2024
Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (chip50.org)

Figure 12.

The US states reporting the highest levels of satisfaction ("very" or "extremely satisfied") with local news included New York (42%), North Carolina (33%), Pennsylvania (33%), Michigan (31%), and Illinois (30%). Satisfaction with local news was also very high in the District of Columbia (48%).

On the other hand, the states with the highest dissatisfaction ("not at all" or "not too satisfied") included Montana (50%), Idaho (49%), Wyoming (45%), New Mexico (45%), and New Hampshire (40%). The numbers in these states indicated significant discontent with local political news coverage.

² Through an OLS regression model with local news satisfaction as the predicted outcome.

Satisfaction with news about local politics and government

How satisfied are you with the quality of news you get about local government and local politics?
[Percent respondents who said they were "very satisfied" or "extremely satisfied"]

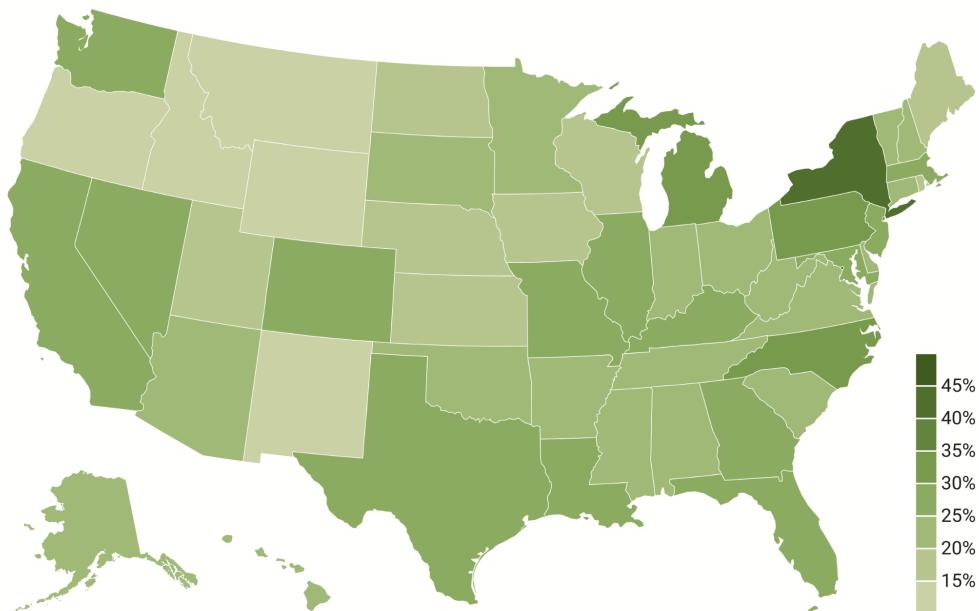


Figure 13.

Dissatisfaction with news about local politics and government

How satisfied are you with the quality of news you get about local government and local politics?
[Percent respondents who said they were "not at all satisfied" or "not too satisfied"]

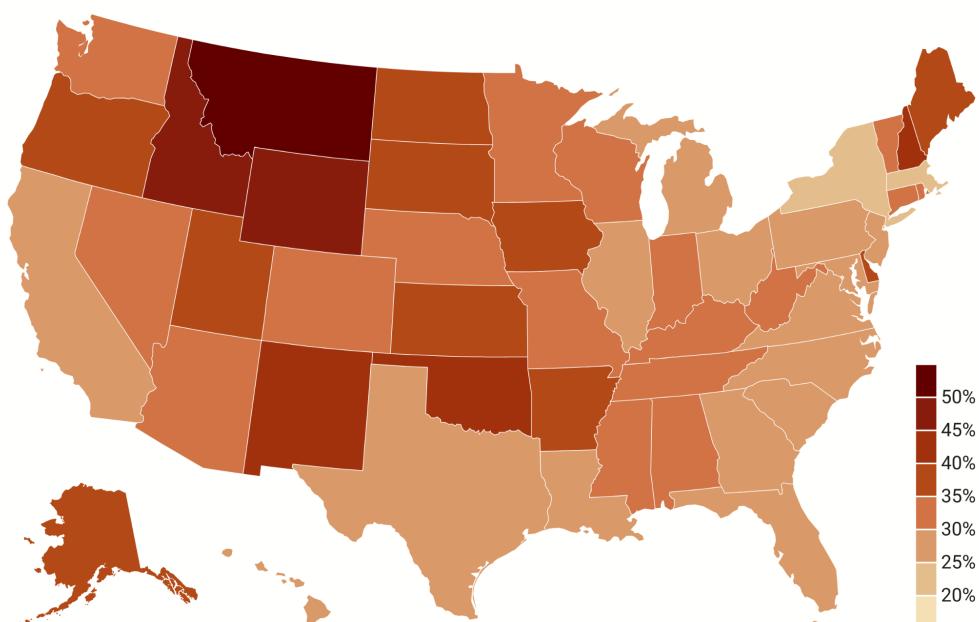


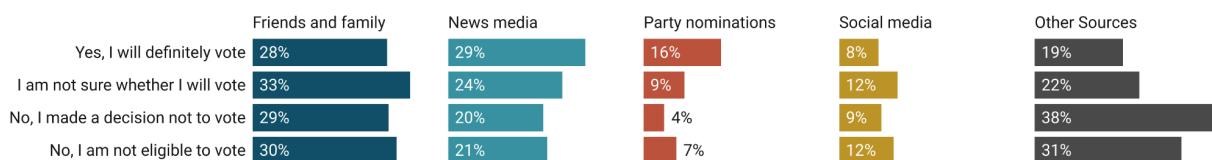
Figure 14.

Appendix A: Additional Figures and Tables

Primary source of election information by self-reported likelihood of voting

Do you plan to vote in the 2024 US presidential election?

When making a decision about voting, including candidates for office and ballot initiatives, what is your most important source of information?



National sample, N = 25,518, Time period: 08/30/2024-10/08/2024

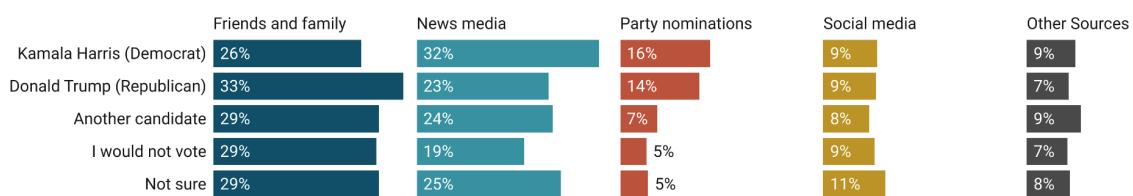
Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (chip50.org)

Figure A1.

Primary source of election information by 2024 presidential candidate preference

If the 2024 U.S. presidential election were held today, which candidate would you vote for?

When making a decision about voting, including candidates for office and ballot initiatives, what is your most important source of information?



National sample, N = 25,518, Time period: 08/30/2024-10/08/2024

Source: The Civic Health and Institutions Project (chip50.org)

Figure A2.

Table 1: Satisfaction with local news about politics by state.

State	Not at all satisfied	Not too satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Very satisfied	Extremely satisfied	MOE	N
AK	12.8	23.5	42.4	17.8	3.4	7.4	315
AL	14.6	19.4	44.7	12.7	8.7	6.1	475
AR	9.5	25.8	43.8	16.1	4.8	6.5	415
AZ	9.5	23.7	45.0	13.4	8.6	5.8	515
CA	9.9	16.6	44.3	17.6	11.6	3.8	1229
CO	13.7	18.6	39.5	14.1	14.1	5.9	486

CT	9.1	21.5	49.3	14.6	5.5	6.9	371
DC	7.9	10.2	34.2	18.2	29.5	6.1	422
DE	15.5	19.5	43.4	16.2	5.4	6.6	399
FL	9.6	17.3	45.6	16.3	11.2	4.3	955
GA	9.2	20.2	41.0	19.6	10.0	5.1	648
HI	14.0	14.9	49.9	16.8	4.4	6.7	387
IA	9.9	29.7	41.4	12.0	7.1	6.3	427
ID	20.9	27.7	38.3	11.2	1.9	6.3	415
IL	9.4	18.7	42.3	20.2	9.5	5.1	655
IN	14.4	19.7	44.2	14.5	7.3	6.2	449
KS	9.4	28.6	46.9	11.4	3.7	6.3	436
KY	9.6	20.8	42.2	20.5	6.8	6.2	448
LA	11.9	17.4	43.5	16.5	10.6	6.1	461
MA	6.6	18.1	47.1	21.0	7.2	6.2	461
MD	9.1	18.1	45.8	21.9	5.1	5.9	495
ME	15.3	21.8	43.8	16.1	2.9	6.4	420
MI	9.2	16.9	42.4	23.4	8.1	5.4	592
MN	11.2	23.3	45.3	17.2	2.9	6.0	488
MO	13.3	17.8	42.2	18.8	7.9	6.0	473
MS	12.6	20.5	44.0	13.8	9.1	6.2	446
MT	18.7	31.4	37.2	8.2	4.6	6.7	368
NC	11.5	13.6	41.5	23.3	10.1	5.3	601
ND	12.7	26.8	43.6	11.9	5.0	7.2	337
NE	14.5	20.3	47.3	12.5	5.4	6.4	425
NH	15.6	24.8	37.6	17.0	5.0	6.4	409
NJ	8.1	19.7	42.7	22.3	7.2	5.7	539

NM	17.6	27.2	40.7	9.9	4.6	6.2	442
NV	11.5	19.0	41.8	18.0	9.7	5.8	511
NY	6.1	18.5	33.2	21.1	21.2	3.9	1013
OH	10.3	18.5	49.1	15.3	6.9	5.4	599
OK	15.2	25.0	38.3	14.7	6.8	6.0	465
OR	15.8	21.9	48.4	11.2	2.7	6.4	435
PA	7.4	18.2	41.7	20.5	12.1	5.1	652
RI	13.8	20.5	46.9	15.9	2.9	6.6	407
SC	7.4	18.7	49.8	16.9	7.2	6.5	416
SD	10.7	25.6	43.5	15.9	4.4	7.1	346
TN	9.3	23.7	42.5	15.5	8.9	6.0	474
TX	9.9	16.4	45.2	18.6	9.9	4.2	970
UT	13.2	23.6	46.1	13.6	3.6	6.4	422
VA	10.8	16.8	51.1	17.3	4.1	6.2	453
VT	13.3	21.1	44.0	15.9	5.7	8.1	262
WA	12.2	19.8	42.2	19.8	6.0	6.2	447
WI	8.1	25.2	46.9	15.0	4.9	6.1	476
WV	11.1	21.1	47.4	13.8	6.5	6.8	377
WY	16.7	28.2	40.4	10.1	4.5	7.6	298

Table 2: Percent respondents using local and national news media as a primary source of election information.

State	Local News	National News	Not a news source	MOE	N
AK	8.5	14.1	77.4	6.3	315
AL	8.8	14.6	76.5	5.2	475
AR	7.2	16.9	76.0	5.5	419

AZ	7.5	13.6	78.8	4.8	518
CA	7.5	15.7	76.8	3.2	1240
CO	7.8	18.0	74.2	5.3	489
CT	8.2	26.0	65.8	6.5	372
DC	8.0	11.1	80.9	5.1	423
DE	9.0	18.9	72.1	6.0	400
FL	7.7	17.5	74.8	3.7	959
GA	7.4	16.7	75.9	4.4	651
HI	14.4	14.7	70.9	6.1	388
IA	8.7	18.6	72.7	5.7	427
ID	7.2	12.7	80.1	5.2	417
IL	7.9	18.5	73.6	4.6	655
IN	6.9	12.7	80.4	5.0	449
KS	4.9	20.3	74.8	5.5	436
KY	5.2	12.8	82.0	4.8	449
LA	13.2	16.3	70.4	5.6	461
MA	7.3	25.6	67.1	5.8	463
MD	10.5	20.9	68.7	5.5	498
ME	7.2	14.3	78.5	5.3	421
MI	8.7	16.1	75.1	4.7	595
MN	10.5	17.4	72.1	5.4	488
MO	8.2	15.3	76.4	5.2	476
MS	6.9	15.3	77.8	5.2	450
MT	5.7	14.6	79.7	5.6	369
NC	8.1	21.9	70.0	5.0	601
ND	8.7	13.4	77.8	6.0	338

NE	10.0	14.4	75.6	5.5	425
NH	6.7	23.3	70.1	6.0	412
NJ	6.9	18.9	74.1	5.0	544
NM	6.8	14.8	78.4	5.2	444
NV	7.0	25.1	67.9	5.5	511
NY	5.3	16.2	78.4	3.4	1016
OH	9.5	19.1	71.4	4.9	601
OK	9.0	12.3	78.7	5.0	465
OR	5.9	20.3	73.8	5.6	436
PA	8.8	17.5	73.7	4.6	657
RI	8.7	19.3	72.0	5.9	407
SC	11.9	18.1	70.0	5.9	418
SD	5.3	18.2	76.4	6.1	346
TN	7.9	14.5	77.6	5.1	476
TX	7.5	16.5	76.0	3.6	976
UT	6.4	15.1	78.6	5.3	425
VA	5.8	19.2	75.0	5.4	455
VT	7.2	19.1	73.7	7.2	262
WA	10.2	14.0	75.8	5.4	447
WI	8.3	21.7	70.0	5.6	477
WV	7.3	12.2	80.5	5.4	377
WY	4.7	10.6	84.7	5.5	299