



ENGAGING NEWS PROJECT

Annette Strauss Institute for Civic Life at the University of Texas at Austin
2504 A Whitis Avenue (R2000), Austin, TX 78712-1538
engagingnewsproject.org · @engagingnews

Contact: Katie Steiner, Communication Associate
(512) 475-7074, katie.steiner@austin.utexas.edu

MAJORITY OF AMERICANS HAVE WRITTEN AN ONLINE COMMENT; MOST HAVE NEVER LEFT OR READ A COMMENT ON A NEWS WEBSITE

A comprehensive new survey of commenters and comment readers found that while the majority of Americans have posted an online comment, most do not comment on news websites. Fifty-five percent of Americans have left an online comment and 78 percent have read online comments at some point. Fifty-one percent have never read or posted a comment on a news website.

For this report, the Engaging News Project worked with GfK (formerly Knowledge Networks) to gather survey data from 1,471 Americans. We obtained data from 1,011 randomly sampled Americans, including 140 news commenters, and then sampled an additional 460 news commenters to give us data on a total of 600 news commenters and 365 readers of news comments.

Through our analysis, we found that the most common place for reading and posting comments is on social media, with 78 percent of commenters stating that was where they had posted a comment. News commenting was far less common. Fourteen percent had commented on news and an additional 35 percent had read comments on a news website, but had not posted a comment.

One of the more interesting findings from the study shows that those leaving comments on news sites are more likely to be male, have lower levels of education, and have lower incomes compared to those who read news comments but do not post them.

Other findings from the report include:

- Local newspaper and television stations' websites, apps and social media pages were the most popular news destinations for both posting and reading comments.
- Politics and public affairs stories were most common for commenting and reading comments.
- The majority of news commenters post comments to express an opinion or emotion, especially when the topic is U.S. politics.
- Just over six in ten commenters and comment readers would like it if journalists clarified factual questions in news comment sections.

"This is one of the most extensive studies to date on who is commenting online, who is reading comments, and why they choose to do either activity," said Dr. Natalie Stroud, director of the Engaging News Project. "We believe this report will help news organizations better understand who is using their comment sections."

The Engaging News Project provides research-based techniques for engaging online audiences in commercially viable and democratically beneficial ways. Learn more at engagingnewsproject.org