



## ENGAGING NEWS PROJECT

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## NEW STUDY SHOWS THAT HOMEPAGE REDESIGN CAN IMPROVE PAGE VIEWS, TIME ON PAGE

Redesigning a website's homepage could improve page views and time on page, according to a new Engaging News Project study that was conducted in conjunction with the launch of two news organizations' redesigned homepages.

To do this work, the Engaging News Project (ENP) partnered with a major Canadian news organization and a major U.S. news organization, both undergoing redesigns of their homepages. For each site, over 900 study participants were randomly shown either an old version of the news site or a redesigned version and then asked questions about their perceptions of the site and what they recalled seeing on the site.

At the same time as ENP's online experiment, the Canadian newsroom randomly showed about 8,000 people visiting their website the new version. The U.S. newsroom launched their redesign a few months before the ENP experiment, and shared data from before and after the change. This allowed ENP to compare the results of the online study to traffic data from the two news organizations' audiences.

"Our results show that an online experiment can pick up on many of the same signals as a full launch of a site redesign," said Emily Van Duyn, research associate for the Engaging News Project. "We believe that doing an online experiment could provide news organizations with a relatively inexpensive way to test out a redesign before a full launch."

This research is a follow-up to [ENP's 2015 research](#) on homepage design. For that study, ENP found that contemporary homepage design resulted in higher time on page and article recall compared to a more classic layout.

In this study, page views and time on page were higher on the new Canadian site compared to the old site. For the U.S. redesign, the bounce rate increased while the average time per visit and the number of people who scrolled halfway down the page declined on the new site compared to the old site.

"We don't know the exact reason that the Canadian news site saw an improvement in their metrics while the U.S. site did not because multiple elements changed," said Dr. Talia Stroud, director of the Engaging News Project. "One possibility is that the new Canadian site incorporated more photos on the part of the site that appeared 'above the fold' while the U.S. site incorporated fewer images."

Other findings from the report include:

- For the Canadian site, article recall was higher for the new site than the old site. There were no significant differences in article recall across the U.S. sites.
- There were differences in *which* articles were recalled on both the U.S. and Canadian sites. Some articles were better recalled on the new site, and others better recalled on the old site. Differences in recall corresponded with the presence of images and where the articles were placed on the page.

- Differences appeared across the old and new sites in both countries regarding how people rated the site and the features they liked most and least.

*The Engaging News Project provides research-based techniques for engaging online audiences in commercially viable and democratically beneficial ways. Learn more at [engagingnewsproject.org](http://engagingnewsproject.org)*