

# Where do Millennials get their political news? Try Facebook and Twitter

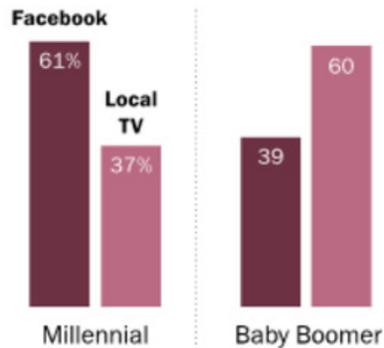
Paula Christian

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## Millennials and Baby Boomers: A Generational Divide in Sources Relied on for Political News

*% who got news about politics and government in the previous week from...*



American Trends Panel (wave 1). Survey conducted March 19-April 29, 2014. Q22, Q24A. Based on online adults.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

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CINCINNATI -- Mike Brill got his first taste of politics while in high school by tuning into The Late Show with Stephen Colbert and The Daily Show with Jon Stewart.

“They presented things in a very entertaining way and I think that helped draw me to it,” he said. “It was easy to see the bias they held and the sort of ridiculous spin they put on things...but it did a good job of appealing to millennials.”

Now Brill, 21, a senior at the University of Dayton, is President of the College Democrats of Ohio. He relies strictly on social media for his political news and follows his favorite reporters on Twitter.

“I scroll really quickly and see what every article is about,” he said. “I like that because I can stay up to date very quickly and instantaneously get news on my phone or laptop.”

Political candidates need more than handshakes and worn shoe leather to win young voters such as Brill. They expect politicians to be on Snapchat, Twitter, Instagram and Vine. And 61 percent of millennials get their news from Facebook, according to a Pew Research Center study.

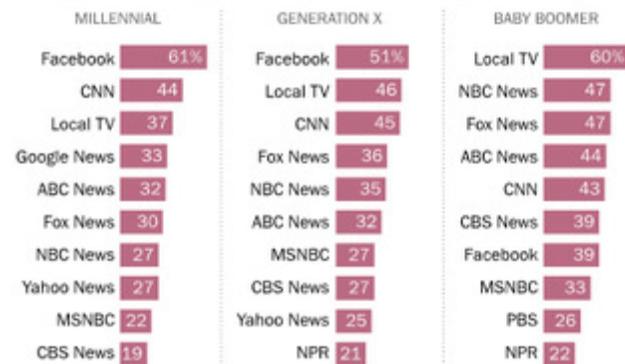
Millennials, who are ages 18 to 34, are such a powerful voting bloc that they have fundamentally changed political campaigns. Millennials grew up with social media and rely on it in a way that older generations simply don't.

This has forced candidates to get savvier with social media -- while at the same time keeping messages strong on traditional outlets such as television news -- in order to reach the other big voting bloc: baby boomers.

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### Among Millennials, Facebook Far Exceeds Any Other Source for Political News

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Source: Pew Research Center

This use of multiple platforms is crucial, said Joe Valenzano, chair of the University of Dayton’s communications department.

“You know that baby boomers are watching the debate...and maybe the coverage that follows,” Valenzano said. “The millennials and younger generations aren’t watching the debate, per se. They’re watching the Twitter feed on the debate. They want the highlights.”

Cincinnati City Council member P.G. Sittenfeld, 31, previewed his first television campaign ads on Facebook and YouTube before airing them during the Democratic presidential debate on Oct. 13. He is running in the U.S. Senate primary against fellow Democrat Ted Strickland, who is 74.

“Find me during tonight’s debate @pgsittenfeld on Twitter,” he urged in the ads, which stressed, “It’s time for a new generation of leadership.”

Sittenfeld, who won his first council seat in 2011 at age 27, embraces social media to reach young supporters.

"You meet people where they are," he said. "I often will pull out my phone and take a quick video for Facebook or Twitter."

### **What Do Millennials Want?**

Chris Dalton, a senior political science major at the University of Cincinnati, has a morning routine when it comes to political news.

"I spend a good portion of my morning searching the blogs," he said. "My Twitter is almost devoted to political pundits." He reads the New York Times, but doesn't watch much television news. And although he's a huge Hillary Clinton fan, he won't rely on her website for news.

"I am a partisan Democrat but I don't blatantly follow what is being put out by the campaigns," he said. "Any information that they put out themselves is filtered through their own lens. I like getting it from a third party where it is an open honest discussion."

Millennials are a distrustful group. They won't rely on authority, government, big business or any "system in place," said Dennis Devlin, owner of Consumer Clarity, a firm that specializes in marketing to millennials.

Because there is so much news on the Internet, millennials have tremendous choice in what they read. But it can also be overwhelming. So they usually read what they agree with, Valenzano said.

"They tend to read content that reflects how they see the

world,” he said. “They don’t follow people on Twitter who they disagree with.”

Young voters are also looking for a personal connection with a candidate.

“You’ve got to speak as if you’re speaking to one person essentially in each case, and know what is going to be most relevant to them,” Devlin said.

Sittenfeld’s platform has been strong on issues that matter to millennials, such as climate change and student debt, he said.

He knows that young voters value authenticity. His advice to candidates: “Be real, be yourself, talk to voters like your friends.”

Candidates nowadays try to appear more human, laid back, funny and engaging, Valenzano said, while also visiting millennial hot spots such as college campuses.

Campus visits are the best way to get the millennial vote, said Brad Johnson, a junior at the University of Cincinnati, where he heads College Republicans. He researched millennials and voting last year.

“Millennials are extremely hard to track down,” he said. “They’re off in college and it is hard to get a hold of them. You don’t have that access to show them how they’re affected by not voting”

## **How is the Marijuana Campaign Reaching Young Voters?**

If anyone understands how to use multiple platforms to

reach young voters, it is Ian James, executive director of ResponsibleOhio, who is leading the push to legalize marijuana on Nov. 3.

“There’s so many different mediums out there now,” James said. “You’ll start to see that layering in. It’s a big effect.” There’s the voting “chum:” pro-pot stickers, signs for dorm windows and door hangars.

There’s the traditional: the 600,000 door-knock campaign, direct mail, phone calls, radio and television ads.

And then there’s social media, aimed directly at young voters. As soon as ResponsibleOhio’s bus tour hits a college campus, the campaign releases that Facebook badge. At UC, it’s “I’m a Responsible Bearcat.”

“The idea is to get that to virally grow,” James said, and then push it into an early voting campaign that nudges and reminds millennials.

“It’s literally like a constant nudge,” he said. “We’ll do that electronically, we’ll do that through phone calls, and we’re working with some music artists that are very popular with millennial voters.”

James declined to name the musicians, but said they will use online videos and text messages to urge millennials to vote to legalize marijuana.

And “Buddie,” ResponsibleOhio’s hokey pot-bud-costumed mascot even made an appearance on Steven Colbert last month. When Buddie visits a college campus, he is often swarmed by students wanting photos.

‘Buddie speaks to that millennial voter in such a goofy way,’ he said. “They see Buddie as this goofy, irreverent Steven Colbertesque sort of in-your-face politics.”

“We’ve got all of these different ways to talk to younger voters,” he said.

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