

The new News Junkie is online and on the phone

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The new news junkie looks very different from even five years ago. Now, she is likely to scan the headlines on her phone in the morning, check a handful of different Web sites over the course of the day and click on links that friends have e-mailed or posted on Facebook or Twitter.

That is the picture painted in a new report by the Pew Internet & American Life Project examining how people consume news. Ninety-nine percent of American adults get news each day, but they are getting it from a wider variety of sources and in many different forms.

The Internet now outranks print newspapers and radio in popularity as a source of news. Sixty-one percent of Americans said they read news online, while 54 percent said they listen to news on the radio, 50 percent read a local newspaper and just 17 percent read a national newspaper. One-third of cellphone owners read the news on their phones.

Only TV news stations are more popular than the Internet. About three-quarters of Americans say they get news on TV. That is despite the fact that the networks are laying off reporters. (The networks are worried about shrinking viewership as more people go online, as *The Times* reported Monday).

Still, print and radio news organizations need not pack up their computers. Just 2 percent of people read the news exclusively online. Fifty-nine percent get news from both online and offline sources.

Many start-ups, investors and news organizations have been making a push into local news online. Surprisingly, only half of Internet users told Pew that they read local news on the Web (unless you count the weather, which is the most popular topic for online readers), while three-quarters said they read national news online.

Readers are turning to their friends to serve as their editors. People have always read the news in part for fodder for dinner party or water-cooler conversations. Today, conversations about the news are happening all over the Web.

More than 80 percent of people receive or share links in e-mail messages or on social networks. A quarter discuss the news of the day in the comment sections on Web sites.

People want to be their own editors, too. About 40 percent of Internet users said it is important to them that news Web sites let them customize the type of news they get and 36 percent said they like multimedia features, like graphics and quizzes, that they can manipulate themselves.

Still, even though readers and their friends are increasingly acting as their own editors, they would appreciate even more culling of the news. Despite today's easy access to news, 70 percent of people reported feeling overwhelmed with all the screens and speakers and pages offering up an endless stream of stories.

Fonte: New York Times, New York, Mar. 1st 2010, Technology, online.