

FLASH REPORT NO. 1 | OCTOBER 2026

YouTube edges out TV as Americans' top source for political news

6 in 10 Americans trust a well-known independent news creator as much as a well-known journalist on politics

National survey of 1,001 U.S. adults, fielded through Prolific on September 26, 2026

A joint initiative of the Newhouse School of Public Communications and the Whitman School of Management

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key findings

The Center for the Creator Economy's first Flash Report measures where Americans get news and how they weigh independent news creators against professional journalists.

WHY WE ASKED

Most Americans now get news on social media, where independent news creators and journalists compete for attention.

WHAT WE DID

A national survey of 1,001 U.S. adults, fielded September 26, 2026, on where they get news and whom they trust.

WHAT WE MEASURED

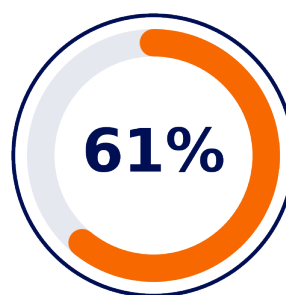
Credibility of independent news creators, what qualifies someone to report the news, and how platform and format shape trust.



Get general news from social media often or always



Social platforms over TV and news sites as the top source for political news, 60% to 32%



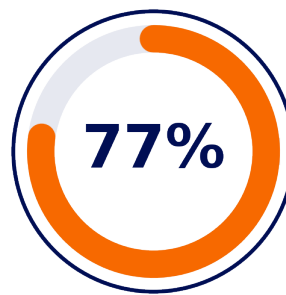
Trust a well-known independent news creator as much as a well-known journalist on politics



See a meaningful difference between an independent news creator and a journalist



Trust independent news creators more when they publicly correct their mistakes



Prefer a human independent news creator over an AI-generated summary

THE TAKEAWAY

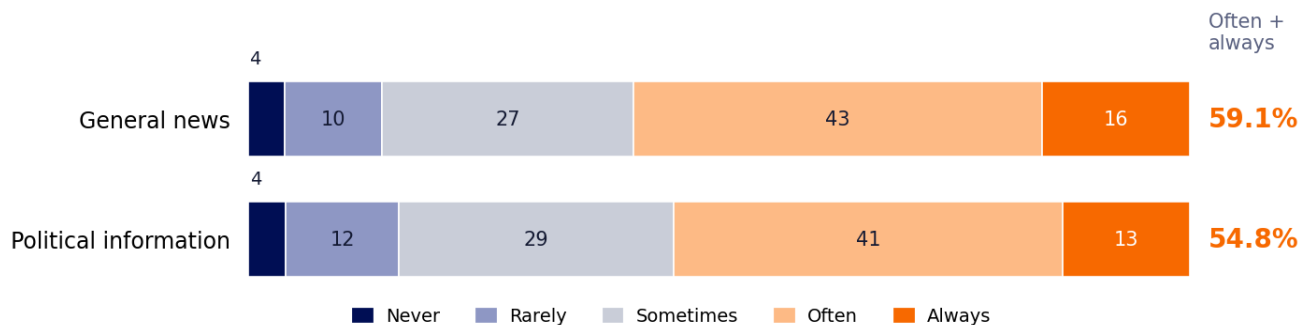
Six in ten Americans trust a well-known independent news creator as much as a well-known journalist on politics, and 79% see the two as distinct roles.

FINDING 1

Social media is a core news source

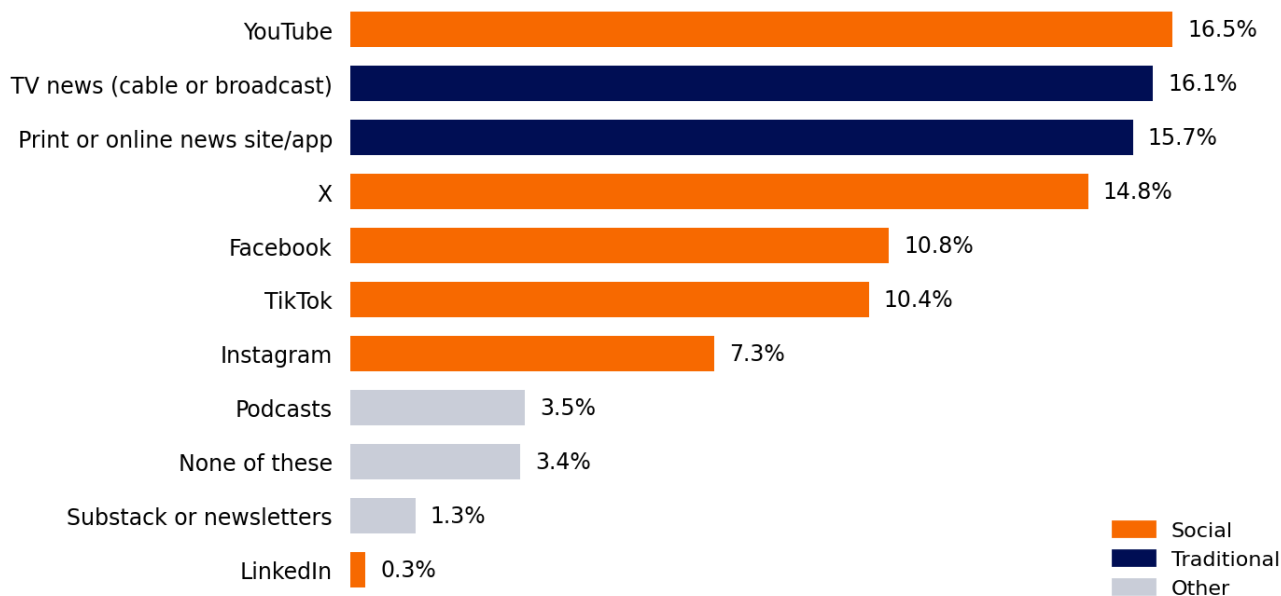
Most Americans get news from social media regularly. YouTube, TV, and news sites run nearly even as individual sources, and social platforms lead as a category.

HOW OFTEN RESPONDENTS GET NEWS AND POLITICAL INFORMATION FROM SOCIAL MEDIA



Response scale: never, rarely, sometimes, often, always. Base: 1,001 U.S. adults.

PLATFORM USED MOST FOR POLITICAL OR ELECTION NEWS



Respondents selected one platform. Social: YouTube, X, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, LinkedIn. Traditional: TV news, print or online news sites and apps. Base: 1,001 U.S. adults.

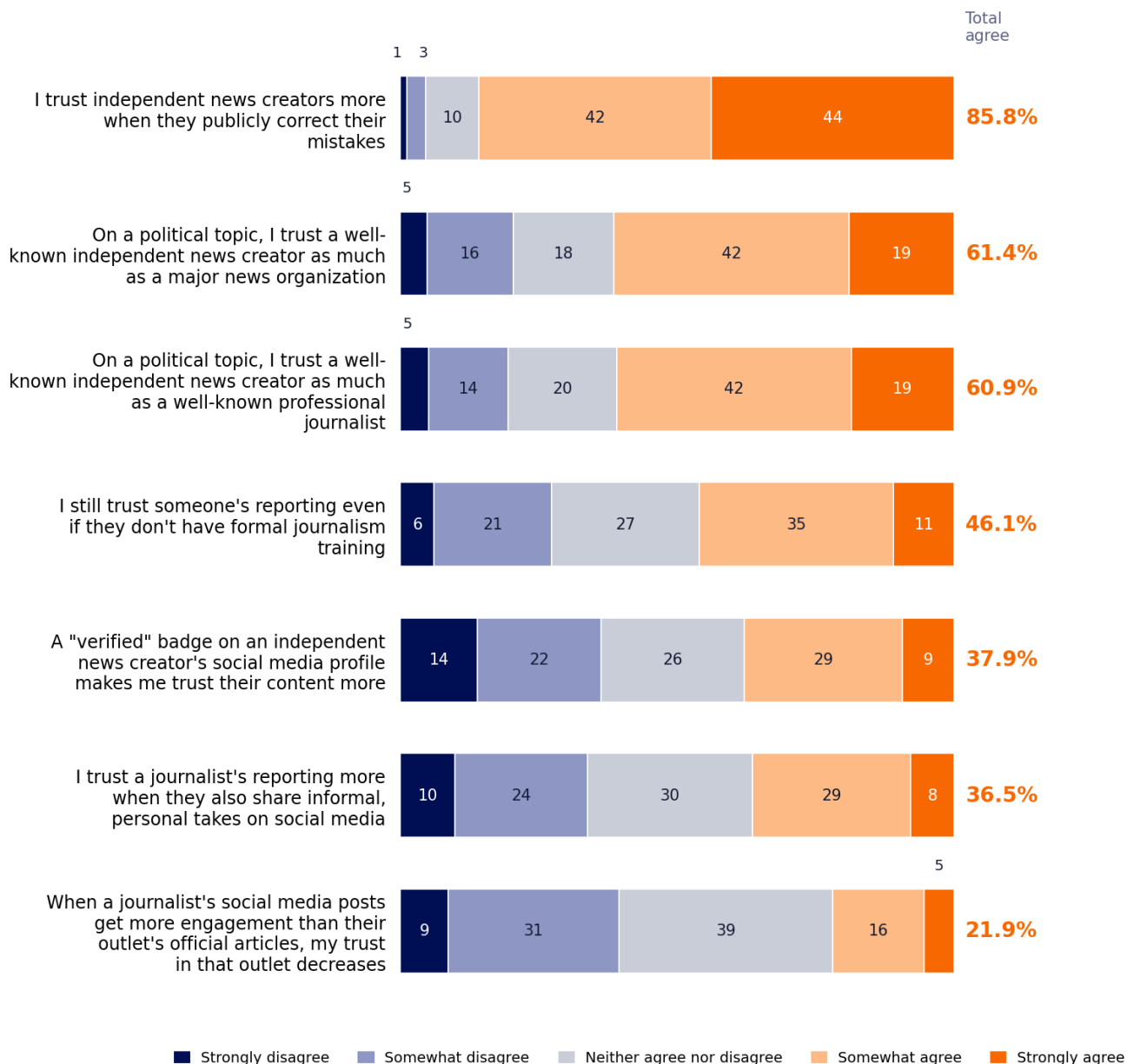
FINDING 2

Corrections lead, badges divide

Public corrections draw the highest agreement of any trust statement in the study. Platform signals carry less weight: 38% say a verified badge raises their trust in an independent news creator, and 36% disagree.

86% trust independent news creators more when they publicly correct their mistakes.

TRUST AND CREDIBILITY IN SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS



Response scale: strongly disagree to strongly agree. Base: 1,001 U.S. adults.

FINDINGS 3 AND 4

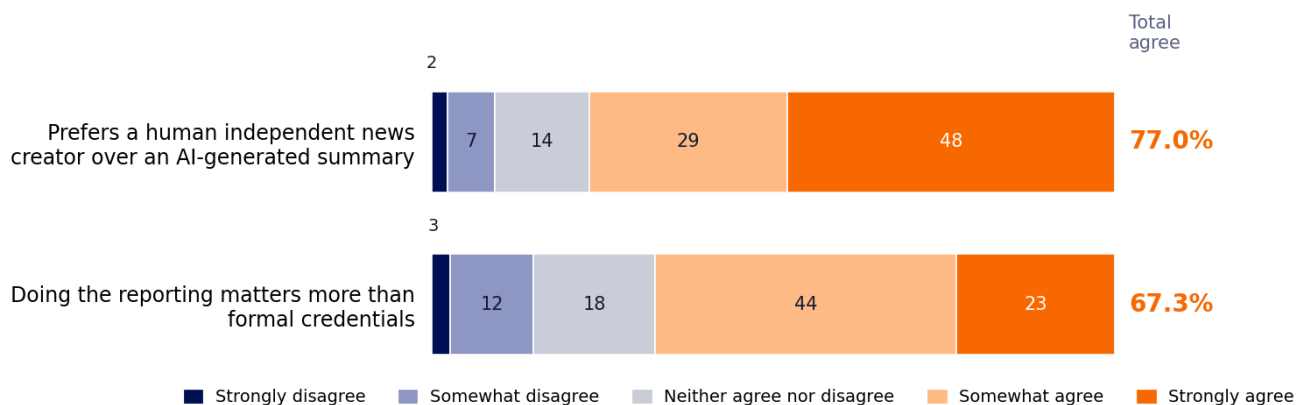
Credentials, AI, and platform

Americans value the act of reporting over formal credentials, favor human voices over AI, and weigh where a claim appears when judging its credibility.

Reporting over credentials. Humans over AI.

77% prefer a human independent news creator over an AI-generated summary, 48% strongly. 67% say doing the reporting matters more than formal credentials.

INDEPENDENT NEWS CREATORS AS JOURNALISTS

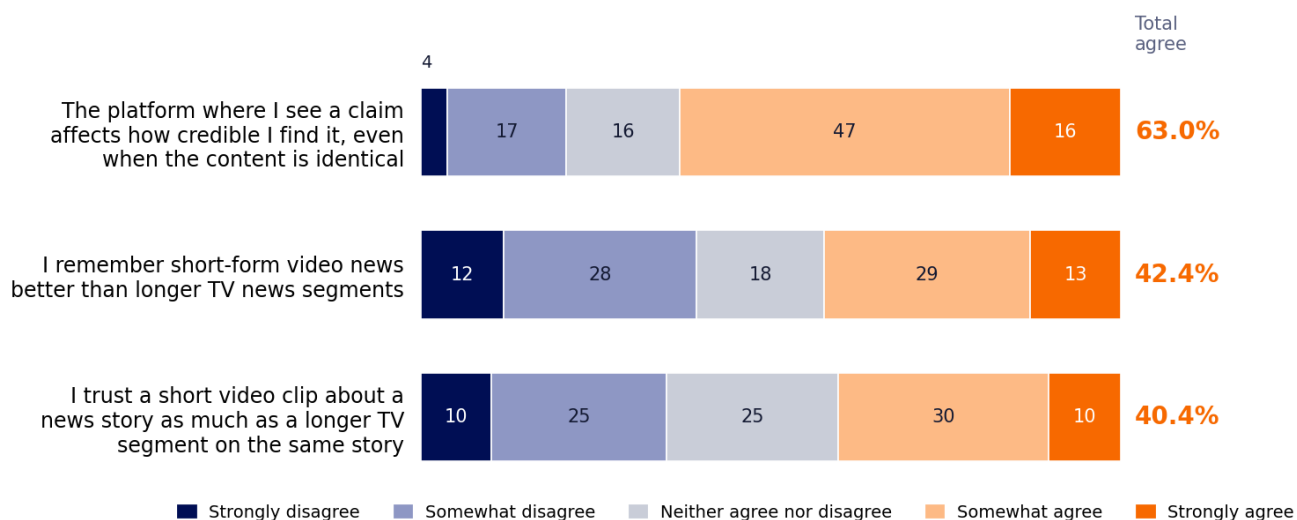


Response scale: strongly disagree to strongly agree. Base: 1,001 U.S. adults.

Platform shapes credibility

63% say the platform affects the credibility of identical content. Views on short-form video are split.

PLATFORM AND FORMAT



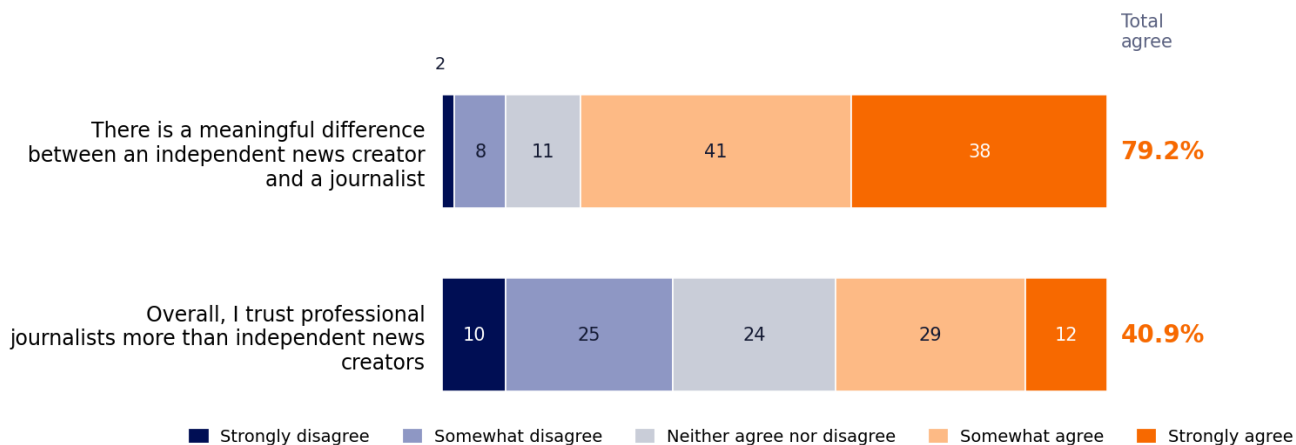
Response scale: strongly disagree to strongly agree. Base: 1,001 U.S. adults.

FINDING 5

Equal trust, distinct roles

Most Americans see independent news creators and journalists as distinct roles. On accuracy, professional journalists lead and outrank news outlets.

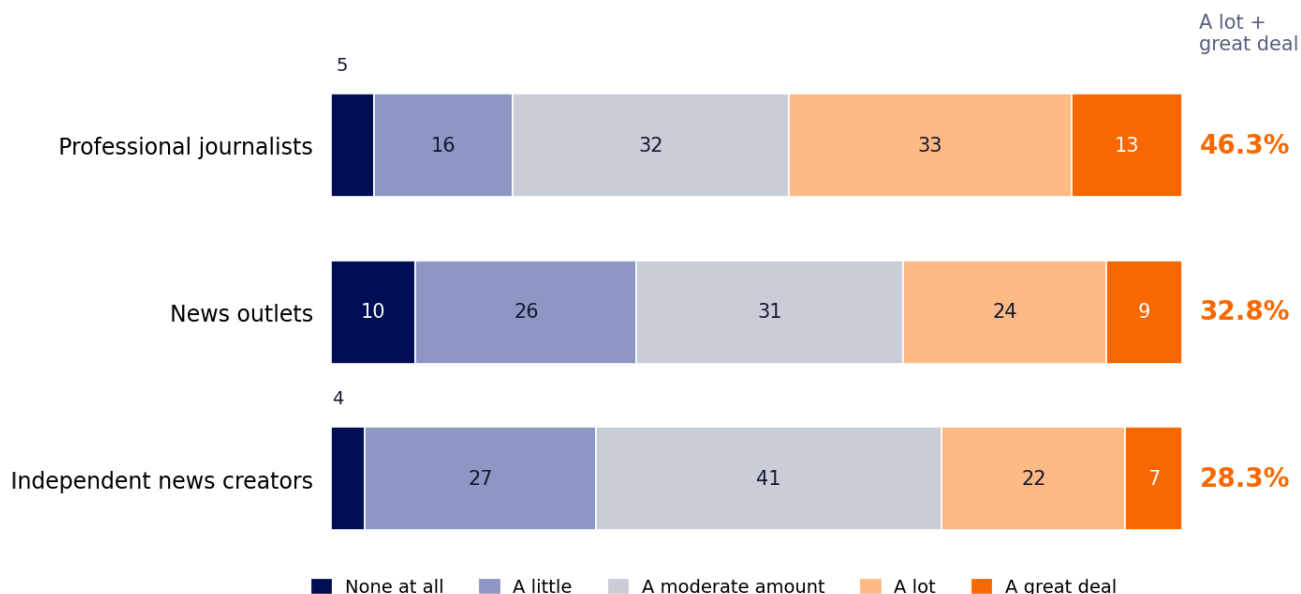
INDEPENDENT NEWS CREATORS VS. JOURNALISTS



Response scale: strongly disagree to strongly agree. Base: 1,001 U.S. adults.

Journalists outrank news outlets, 46% to 33%.

TRUST IN EACH SOURCE TO REPORT THE NEWS



Response scale: none at all, a little, a moderate amount, a lot, a great deal. Base: 1,001 U.S. adults.

9.9% report no trust at all in news outlets, 2.5 times the rate for independent news creators (3.9%).

WHAT IT MEANS

Who leans which way

Trust patterns differ by party, race/ethnicity, and social media use, after accounting for other demographics.

- **Social media news use runs highest among younger, Black, and Republican respondents.**
- **Trust in independent news creators rises with social media news use and runs higher among Republicans and Black respondents.**
- **Trust in professional journalists and news outlets runs higher among Democrats and Black respondents.**
- **Trusting journalists more than independent news creators overall is more common among Democrats and Asian and Black respondents.**
- **Preferring a human voice over AI is slightly stronger among heavier social media news users and Democrats.**

Models control for age, sex, race/ethnicity, party, student status, and employment status. Comparisons are to Independents and White respondents.

METHODOLOGY

Sample	1,001 U.S. adults, representative sample recruited through Prolific
Fielded	September 26, 2026
Demographics	Ages 18 to 84 (average 45.8); 50.6% female, 49.4% male; 63.4% White, 11.6% Black, 10.7% mixed, 8.1% other, 6.2% Asian; 42.6% Independent, 29.5% Democrat, 27.9% Republican
Analysis	Percentages are of all respondents and are rounded. Group comparisons use regression models on the 939 respondents with complete demographic data; reported differences are statistically significant ($p < .05$).

ABOUT THE CENTER

The Center for the Creator Economy (CCE) at Syracuse University studies and shapes the fast-growing industry built by independent creators. Launched in 2025 as a joint initiative of the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications and the Martin J. Whitman School of Management, the CCE connects research, education, and industry. The Center publishes monthly Flash Reports and original research on creators, audiences, and platforms. It prepares students for careers in the creator economy through coursework and hands-on programs, and convenes creators, brands, platforms, and policymakers through events including the annual 'CUSE Creator Con. Learn more at creatoreconomy.syracuse.edu.

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