



*The Greater Montana Foundation
benefits the people of Montana by encouraging communication,
with an emphasis on electronic media,
on issues, trends and values of importance
to present and future generations of Montanans.*

Fact Sheet

Key findings & insights from Montanans' Internet News Sources and Use Survey 2016

Summary findings on issues and overall use of available information sources.

Major findings of the fall 2015 survey of issues and news sources remain valid:

- The top-five issues of importance to Montanans, with only slight response percentage changes, remain **jobs and the economy, education, health care, moral values, and energy and resource development**.
- Traditional sources of news and information are very important in Montana, but technology — led by online and mobile information sources — is changing how Montanans are informed about their key issues.

Significant 2016 trends in Montanans' use of the internet and online news sources:

- Almost 87 percent of all adult Montanans now use the internet, with rates of internet access and use continuing to match national levels. Nearly three-quarters of Montanans accessing the internet do so predominantly on their smartphones, followed closely by computer and laptop.
- Montanans who use the internet to obtain news also use television, radio and newspapers — and cite conversations with friends and relatives as news sources.
- Montana newspaper, television and radio station websites are heavily used by Montanans who obtain news from the internet — and those Montana sites are the dominant internet sources of local (community) and Montana news.
- National and international websites specializing in such news are also dominant.
- More Montanans say they receive news unintentionally while using the internet compared with those who directly seek online news stories — and this seems especially true of young adults who may “bump into” news more frequently on the internet or social media.
- While men and women access the internet equally in general, there are marked demographic differences in internet use for obtaining and sharing news. Younger adults tend toward more

internet and social media use for obtaining news compared with the traditional news sources of television, radio and newspapers. Women are significantly more likely to obtain news from a social media site — and to share news items of interest with others.

- Just under half of Montanans who use the internet for news have shared a news item with others. There is evidence suggesting some Montanans interact in social media “information echo chambers,” sharing news with people who usually have similar views. They also tend more frequently to believe news items received from like-minded persons.

Methodology: *The Montanans’ Internet News Sources and Use Survey was commissioned by the Greater Montana Foundation and conducted by the Bureau of Business and Economic Research at the University of Montana. The random-sample survey was conducted between September 6 and 29, 2016. A total of 567 adults living in Montana were surveyed by landline and mobile telephone. The results have a sampling error rate of 4.1 percent for all 567 respondents and 4.4 percent for the 492 respondents who use the internet.*