



Internet Ranks Highest for Promoting Political Awareness and Civic Involvement Among Young People

Least used medium: National Evening News on TV or Cable

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The Internet is the best information source for promoting political awareness and civic engagement among youths aged 14-22, according to findings reported in the June issue of *Communication Research*. Conversely, a heavy diet of television viewing lowered political awareness.

Newspaper consumption among youths heightened political knowledge, but did little to motivate the readers to become active in their communities, researchers concluded.

The study, conducted among 1,501 young people nationwide between April and September, 2004, is the most comprehensive examination to date of media use among young people and how that use relates to civic and political behavior, according to the study's authors, Josh Pasek, Daniel Romer and Kathleen Hall Jamieson of the University of Pennsylvania and Kate Kenski of the University of Arizona, Tucson. An abstract of the article is available here: <http://crx.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/33/3/115>.

Almost 60 percent of the youths surveyed said they used the Internet as a source of information most days of the week. The least popular source of information was the national evening TV or cable news.

The survey showed that the best informed and most civically active youths gathered information from the Internet, by reading books and watching national television news.

“Newspaper reading was strongly related to political awareness but did not appear to facilitate civic activity,” according to the study. “On the other hand, searching the Internet for information appears to have rather global effects across both political and civic engagement.”

Although the 2004 presidential election saw a surge in interest among voters under the age of 25, historical trends show a declining level of political involvement among young people. The researchers noted: “It remains to be seen, therefore, if the Age of the Internet can reverse these patterns, leading to an increase in both political and civic activity.”

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