

Connecting Pew Findings To News Literacy Concepts

News meets a mixture of social, civic, personally-enriching, and work-related needs in people's lives. The 93% of Americans who say they follow the news at least occasionally report a variety of reasons for doing so. Surprisingly, the most popular reasons for following the news do not relate to personal entertainment or professional motivations. Instead, they have to do with social interaction and/or a sense of civic responsibility:

- 72% of the news-consumer cohort said one reason they consume news is because they enjoyed talking about it with family, friends and colleagues
- 69% of this group say they feel they have a social or civic obligation to stay informed
- 61% say they often find information in the news that helps them improve their lives
- 44% say news provides a relaxing diversion or personal entertainment
- 19% say they need to follow the news for their jobs

There were not many differences among demographic groups in terms of the functions the news plays in their lives. Women in this news-consumer cohort are more likely than men to say they get information from the news that improved their lives. College graduates are more likely than those who have no college experience to cite all the uses as important to them. And some differences are tied to race and ethnicity:


Reasons people use the news

93% of adults follow the news at least occasionally. In each group, the % who cite these reasons for getting news:

	All news-following adults	Whites	Blacks	Hispanics
Enjoy talking with friends, family, about what's happening in the world	72%	71%	79%*	74%
Feel special social or civic obligation to stay informed	69%	71%*	70%*	55%
Find information in news that helps improve my life	61%	59%	69%*	65%
Provides me with entertainment, relaxing diversion	44%	43%	50%	44%
Need to follow news for my job	19%	19%	19%	16%

* indicates a statistically significant difference.

Source: PRC-Internet & American Life Project and PRC-Project for Excellence in Journalism Online News Survey - December 23, 2009-January 19, 2010. N=2,120. Margin of error is +/- 2.5 percentage points.

 Pew Internet

We have discussed three types of news people of all cultures need: Alerts, Diverts, Connects. Do you find those categories in these fresh data?

Do these data support or undermine the assertion that people have a fundamental need to both receive and spread information?

How do the uses and impacts of Facebook compare to those of the talking drums of West Africa or to smoke signals, which were used by soldiers on the Great Wall, by early cryptographer Polybius in ancient Greece and by the North American Plains tribes

-Excerpted from the reading assignment on Participatory Consumers

In what way have social media like Facebook changed the way humans act on their ancient and universal relationship to information, particularly information that alerts, diverts and connects us?