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# Election 2006 Online

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**The number of Americans citing the internet as the source of most of their political news and information doubled since the last mid-term election**

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# Summary of Findings

## The number of Americans using the internet as their main source of political news doubled since the last mid-term election.

The number of Americans who got most of their information about the 2006 campaign on the internet doubled from the most recent mid-term election in 2002 and rivaled the number from the 2004 presidential election year.

In all, 15% of all American adults say the internet was the primary source for campaign news during the election, up from 7% in the mid-term election of 2002 and close to the 18% of Americans who said they relied on the internet during the presidential campaign cycle in 2004.

<b>The number of Americans relying on the internet for political news doubled from the 2002 mid-term election and grew fivefold in the past decade</b>						
<i>Responses from all adults to the question: How have you been getting most of your news about the November elections? *</i>						
<b>Primary sources</b>	<b>1992</b>	<b>1996</b>	<b>2000***</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2006</b>
Television **	82%	72%	70%	66%	78%	69%
Newspapers	57%	60%	39%	33%	39%	34%
Radio	12%	19%	15%	13%	17%	17%
Internet	NA	3%	11%	7%	18%	15%
Magazines	11%	11%	4%	1%	3%	2%

*\* Respondents were allowed to give two responses.*  
*\*\* Numbers do not add to 100% because of rounding and multiple answers.*  
*\*\*\*The 2000 results are based on registered voters only.*

*Source: Joint post-election survey by the Pew Internet & American Life Project and the Pew Research Center for The People & The Press. November 2006. N=2,562. Margin of error is ±2%.*

This report from the Pew Internet & American Life Project and the Pew Research Center for The People & The Press is based on the findings of a daily tracking survey on how Americans' used the internet during the campaign of 2006. All numerical data was gathered through telephone interviews conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International between November 8 and December 4, 2006, among a sample of 2,562 adults, aged 18 and older. Some 200 of the completed interviews were conducted on cell phones among American adults who only have cell phones and do not have landline phone connections. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling and other random effects is +/- 2%. For results based Internet users (n=1,578), the margin of sampling error is +/- 3%.

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### **31% of Americans used the internet during the 2006 campaign to get political news and information and discuss the races through email.**

Some 25% of all Americans (or 37% of internet users) say they got information online about the 2006 elections and 10% of Americans (15% of internet users) say they exchanged emails about the candidates. Many people used the internet both ways – for news and for communication about politics. Altogether, 31% of all Americans (or 46% of internet users) say they were online during the campaign season gathering information and exchanging views via email. Throughout this report, we call this group *campaign internet users*. They represent more than 60 million people.

The growing importance of the internet in political life is tied at least in part to the spread of broadband connections in American homes. From November 2002 to November 2006, the share of adult Americans with high-speed connections at home grew from 17% to 45%. These “always on” internet connections draw people to online news of any kind, political news included.

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### **Relatively young broadband users say the internet is a more important political news source than newspapers.**

While television and newspapers still dominate political communication for the majority of Americans, there is now a group of citizens who use the internet more than newspapers. They are relatively young – under 36 years old – and they have broadband connections at home. Some 35% of those in that cohort say the internet was their main source of political news during the 2006 campaign, compared with 18% who cite newspapers. For older broadband users, the internet still seems to be a supplemental source of political information and activity.

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### **A new online political elite is emerging as 23% of campaign internet users became online political activists.**

For the first time in our politics and the internet surveys we asked respondents whether they had created and shared political content and found:

- 8% of campaign internet users posted their own political commentary to a newsgroup, website or blog.
- 13% of them forwarded or posted someone else’s political commentary.
- 1% of them created political audio or video recordings.
- 8% of them forwarded or posted someone else’s political audio or video recordings.

In all, 23% of campaign internet users (or 11% of internet users and 7% of the entire U.S. population) had done at least one of those things. That translates into about 14 million people who were using the “read-write Web” to contribute to political discussion and activity.

## Summary of Findings

These internet users are particularly active in every type of online political endeavor and are the most likely group to be accessing all kinds of political material and performing most online political activities more than others. Throughout this report we call this group *online political activists*.

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### **While mainstream news sources still dominate the online news and information gathering by campaign internet users, a majority of them now get political material from blogs, comedy sites, government websites, candidate sites, or alternative news sites.**

Asked where they went online to get news and information about the campaign, the greatest number of campaign internet users cite traditional news organizations or online services that syndicate news from traditional sources, such as wire services. However, more than half of campaign internet users (53%) go to Web sources beyond those that are fed by traditional news media in the United States. The breakdown of where campaign internet users went:

- 60% got news and information about the campaign from **news portals** such as Google News or Yahoo! News
- 60% got news and information about the campaign from **TV network websites** such as CNN.com or ABCNews.com.
- 48% got news and information about the campaign from **local news organization websites**.
- 31% got news and information about the campaign from **websites of major national newspapers** such as *USA Today* or the *New York Times*.
- 28% got news and information about the campaign from the **websites of state or local governments**.
- 24% got news and information about the campaign from **issue-oriented websites**.
- 20% got news and information about the campaign from **blogs**.
- 20% got news and information about the campaign from **international news organization websites**, such as the BBC or Al Jazeera.
- 20% got news and information about the campaign from **websites created by candidates**.
- 19% got news and information about the campaign from **news satire websites** like *The Onion* or *The Daily Show*.
- 19% got news and information about the campaign from the **websites of radio news organizations**, such as National Public Radio.
- 10% got news and information about the campaign from **websites of alternative news organizations**, such as Altnet.org or NewsMax.com.
- 10% got news and information about the campaign from **email listservs**.

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### **While most campaign internet users say convenience is a major reason they use the internet, more than half cite the internet's breadth of information and perspectives as a major reason for their online activity.**

For most, the internet's value lies in its convenience. But many also cite its virtues as a source of information beyond that which is available in other media.

- 71% of campaign internet users cited convenience as a major reason they get political news online.
- 49% said a major reason they got political news online is that they could get information on the Web that is not available elsewhere as a major reason.
- 41% said a major reason they got political news online is that they don't get all the news and information they want from traditional news sources such as the daily newspaper or network TV news.
- 34% said a major reason they got political news online is that they can get perspectives from outside their community on candidates and issues
- 28% said a major reason they got political news online was to get local perspectives on the races.

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### **Republicans and Democrats were equally likely to rely on the internet – but there were partisan trends in usage of other political news sources.**

Republican and Democratic voters were equally likely to say that the internet was their main source of election news (17% among each group). Seen a somewhat different way, the internet news audience for the 2006 race was no different in its vote preferences than the public as a whole.

In contrast, there were notable differences between Republican and Democratic voters in their preferences for other news sources. For instance, Democratic voters were more likely than Republicans to cite newspapers and certain broadcast and cable news operations such as CBS, ABC and CNN as their main sources of news, while Republicans were more likely to favor the Fox cable TV News and radio.

## Summary of Findings

<b>Media choices of Republican and Democratic Voters</b>		
<i>Asked of adults: How have you been getting most of your news about the November elections?</i>		
	<b>Main source of news</b>	
	<i>Voted Republican</i>	<i>Voted Democratic</i>
All forms of TV	69%	74%
<b>Fox Cable</b>	<b>24%**</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Local news</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>ABC Network</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>NBC Network</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>14%*</b>
<b>CNN Cable</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>17%*</b>
<b>CBS Network</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>11%*</b>
<b>MSNBC Cable</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>6%*</b>
Newspapers	38%	44%*
Radio	21%**	14%
Internet	17%	17%
Magazines	2%	2%
<p>* Statistically significant difference for Democrats compared with Republicans.  ** Statistically significant difference for Republicans compared with Democrats.  Source: Joint post-election survey by the Pew Internet &amp; American Life Project and the Pew Research Center for The People &amp; The Press. November 2006. N=2,562. Margin of error is ±2%.</p>		

## Summary of Findings

<b>The internet and campaign 2006: Summary of Findings at a Glance</b>
The number of Americans using the internet as their main source of political news doubled since the last mid-term election.
31% of Americans used the internet during the 2006 campaign to get political news and information and discuss the race through email. We call them campaign internet users.
Relatively young broadband users say the internet is a more important political news source than newspapers.
A new online political elite is emerging as 23% of campaign internet users became online political activists.
While mainstream news sources still dominate the online news and information gathering by campaign internet users, a majority of them now get political material from blogs, comedy sites, government websites, candidate sites or alternative sites.
While most campaign internet users say convenience is a major reason they use the internet, more than half cite the internet's breadth of information and perspectives as a major reason for their online activity.
Republicans and Democrats were equally likely to rely on the internet – but there were partisan trends in usage of other political news sources.
<i>Source: The Internet and Campaign 2006. Rainie, Lee, and John Horrigan. Washington, DC: Pew Internet &amp; American Life Project and Pew Research Center for The People &amp; The Press. January 17, 2007.</i>

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# Acknowledgements

**About the Pew Internet & American Life Project:** The Pew Internet Project is a nonprofit, non-partisan initiative of the Pew Research Center. The Project is a think tank that explores the impact of the internet on children, families, communities, the work place, schools, health care, and civic/political life. The Project aims to be an authoritative source for timely information on the Internet's growth and societal impact. Support for the project is provided by The Pew Charitable Trusts. The project's website is: [www.pewinternet.org](http://www.pewinternet.org).

**About The Pew Research Center for The People & The Press:** The Center is an independent opinion research group that studies attitudes toward the press, politics, and public policy issues. The Center is best known for regular national surveys that measure public attentiveness to major news stories and for polling that charts trends in values and fundamental political and social attitudes. The Center's purpose is to serve as a forum for ideas on the media and public policy through public opinion research. In this role it serves as an important information resource for political leaders, journalists, scholars, and public interest organizations. Its website is: <http://people-press.org/>.

**About Princeton Survey Research Associates International:** PSRAI conducted the survey that is covered in this report. It is an independent research company specializing in social and policy work. The firm designs, conducts, and analyzes surveys worldwide. Its expertise also includes qualitative research and content analysis. With offices in Princeton, New Jersey, and Washington, D.C., PSRAI serves the needs of clients around the nation and the world. The firm can be reached at 911 Commons Way, Princeton, NJ 08540, by telephone at 609-924-9204, by fax at 609-924-7499, or by email at [ResearchNJ@PSRA.com](mailto:ResearchNJ@PSRA.com)

# Part 1.

## The Media Landscape for Politics in 2006

Each campaign cycle since 1994 has generated its own internet story. In 1994, it was the appearance of the first campaign Web site by Senator Diane Feinstein. In 1996, Web politics turned Presidential. One of the top stories was that Republican nominee Bob Dole gave the wrong url for his site during a nationally televised debate. But he didn't seem to suffer any serious problem from the gaffe, demonstrating how peripheral internet politics was to the basic structure of the campaign just a decade ago.

By 1998, some clear internet effects began to emerge. Independent Jesse Ventura stunned the Minnesota political establishment by conducting an insurgent campaign that featured email communications. Two years later, GOP presidential candidate John McCain proved that candidates could raise a lot of money online and the power of the internet as a source of political news and information was well documented.<sup>1</sup>

In the mid-term election of 2002, work by the Pew Internet & American Life Project and the Pew Research Center for The People & The Press showed that many voters were turning to the internet to get political information from multiple sources. The newest class of websites shaping online politics that year was interest group and advocacy organization sites.

In the presidential race of 2004, Howard Dean's campaign showed political actors how social networking tools like blogs and Meetups could be effective in generating voter interest, in recruiting and motivating volunteers, and changing the interplay between citizens and campaigns.

The 2006 campaign produced its own story lines. Many of the online activities from previous years matured and were quickly embraced and built into the campaigns of 2006. More political Web sites emerged – both by campaigns and interest groups. More money was raised. More online activism was evident. People exchanged more emails about politics and wrote more political blogs.

Innovations emerged in 2006 as well. Outside the boundaries of the internet, robo-calls (pre-recorded telephone calls soliciting votes) became a prominent part of the political environment.<sup>2</sup> On the internet, the rise of online video as a political force was a major story.

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<sup>1</sup> See "Internet Election News Audience Seeks Convenience, Familiar Names" available at [http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/27/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/27/report_display.asp)

<sup>2</sup> See "Robo-calls in the 2006 campaign," available at [http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/197/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/197/report_display.asp).

## Part 1. The Media Landscape for Politics in 2006

This report attempts to document the varied uses of the internet by citizens during the 2006 campaign. It builds on similar work that began in 1996 by the Pew Research Center for The People & The Press and has been repeated and updated in each campaign since then.

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### **We created a new definition of “campaign internet users” in this survey.**

While material gathered in this survey repeats questions from past surveys, there were some notable changes in this year’s version that have reduced our capacity to do election-to-election comparisons. We did not lightly give up that capacity to look at some trends, but we felt that adjusting the structure of the survey was necessary to reflect the technical and social realities of 2006. Simply put, people think about the internet differently from the way they did in 1990s when many of our original questions about the internet and politics were formulated.

Perhaps the most significant change comes in our definition of campaign internet users or, as we have called them in the past, political news consumers. In our past work, we have defined them as people who answered “yes” to the question: “Please tell me if you ever do any of the following when you go online. Do you ever look for news or information about politics and the campaign?”

The language felt a bit archaic and somewhat imprecise. So, we have now defined campaign internet users as anyone who answered “yes” to one of several questions in our survey. Campaign internet users in this report are those who say the internet was one of the top two news sources they used to get news “about the November elections” or who say “yes” to this query: “Did you get any news or information about the November elections on the internet or through email?” Or they answered “yes” to this: “Did you send or receive emails about the candidates or the campaigns – either with personal acquaintances or political organizations – or did you not happen to do this?”

Using these questions, we calculate that 31% of all American adults (or 46% of internet users) can be considered campaign internet users. This figure isn’t precisely comparable to our past reports about the size of the campaign internet user group because it was constructed in a different way. Nevertheless, in some key instances it is still reasonable to talk about growing use of the internet for political information and conversation – and we do so.

Several other changes in the way we conducted and report on our survey are discussed in the section on Methodology at the end of this report.

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### **The American news mediascape is in flux.**

The basic findings about the media universe in this survey continue to highlight patterns that have been well documented in previous work by The Pew Research Center for The People & The Press. The news market has been fracturing for more than a decade and news audiences have become increasingly politicized as trust in the mainstream media has declined and public perceptions of the credibility of mainstream news sources has

## Part 1. The Media Landscape for Politics in 2006

fallen.<sup>3</sup> Over this period, the internet is playing an ever-more-important role in the news diet of Americans.<sup>4</sup> A decade ago, just one-in-fifty Americans got the news with some regularity from what was then a brand new source -- the internet. Today, nearly one-in-three regularly get news online.

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### Television still dominates the typical day of news consumption.

In addition to asking detailed questions about political news consumption, we asked Americans about their consumption of general news. To capture a snapshot of news consumption on a “typical day,” we queried respondents about their behavior “yesterday” (the day before the respondent was contacted to take our survey), Americans report the following:

- 61% say they watched a television news program.
- 38% say they read a newspaper.
- 21% say they got news on the internet. This is 31% of the internet population.

As we documented earlier this year<sup>5</sup>, those who have broadband at home are different news consumers from non-internet users and dial-up users. In this survey, broadband users are just as likely to turn to the internet for news as they are their local newspaper on a typical day. Some 38% of home broadband users get news online on a typical day, the same percentage as home broadband users who read a newspaper on a typical day. For home dial-up users, however, online news is not as much an everyday activity.

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### Media experiences are moving to different channels: People go online to “read” newspapers and “watch” TV newscasts.

Notable numbers of Americans are consuming traditional news in new media forms. Some 8% of those who watched TV news “yesterday” say they viewed the program on something other than a TV, particularly their computers. Some 14% of those with broadband at home and 16% of those with broadband at work reported watching TV news on their computers. In addition, this was a practice that stood out for online men and those who are in their 30s.

Similarly, 38% of Americans say they read a newspaper “yesterday” and 15% of them say they read the newspaper online. Again, broadband users led the way: 27% of those with broadband at home read an online version of a newspaper and 32% of those with

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<sup>3</sup> See “Online Papers Modestly Boost Newspaper Readership” available at <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=282> and “News Audiences Increasingly Politicized” available at: <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=215>

<sup>4</sup> See “Online Papers Modestly Boost Newspaper Readership” available at <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=282>. Also see “Internet Sapping Broadcast News Audience” available at: <http://people-press.org/reports/display.php3?ReportID=36>

<sup>5</sup> See “Online News: For many home broadband users, the internet is a primary news source,” available at: [http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/178/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/178/report_display.asp)

## Part 1. The Media Landscape for Politics in 2006

broadband at work did such reading. Whites, men, and those in their 30s were the most likely groups to read newspapers online.

Of course, a significant number of those online readers *also* read a paper copy of a newspaper. Among the 38% who read a newspaper yesterday (a population of slightly over 75 million people):

- 84% only read a paper copy of the newspaper
- 6% only read an online version of a newspaper
- 9% read both a paper and an online version of a newspaper.

## Part 2.

# The Role of the Internet in the 2006 Election Cycle

The internet's role in campaigns has grown dramatically in the past decade. Several forces are driving this.

At the top of the list is the growth of broadband. There were only a handful of home broadband users in 1996. When the Pew Internet Project began asking questions about broadband access in the summer of 2000 only 3% of Americans had high-speed connections at home. In the post-election survey reported here fully 43% of American adults have broadband connections at home. Those always-on linkages and faster delivery make it easier for people to get news online.

Second on the list is the increase in number of internet users with veteran status. At the dawn of the Pew Internet Project's work 46% of Americans were internet users and just 30% of them had three or more years of experience. In August, a Project survey found that 70% of Americans use the internet and fully 66% of have six or more years of experience. The more years people are online, the more likely they are to do more things online, including getting their news. Indeed, many users are now sophisticated enough to begin customizing their online news experience and regularly check their favorite news sites for headlines or more in-depth information on the stories about which they are aware. In a December 2005 survey, the Project found that 19% of internet users had customized a news site or set up a news alert to deliver the information that particularly interested them.

Third is the growth of news content online. News is a primary information "currency" online. Many thousands of Web sites now offer news and headline services, even sites that are not run by news organizations.

Fourth is people's increased fluency with web communication tools. Online communication applications have become so embedded in Americans' daily rhythms that it is natural people will use email and instant messaging and now even cell phone text messaging as ways to discuss politics, share jokes about candidates, or forward the latest insider political information to friends. At the same time, campaigns are encouraging greater internet use by increasingly relying on email and Web site alerts to stay in touch with voters.

There were other factors in 2006 that might account for higher internet use. It was a very exciting campaign season with much at stake; a great deal of the mainstream media coverage in the late stages of the campaign focused on the prospect that Democrats might seize one or both congressional chambers. The prospect of a shift in power might have

## Part 2. The Role of the Internet in the 2006 Election Cycle

drawn more people to all kinds of news consumption, including heavier user of online resources.

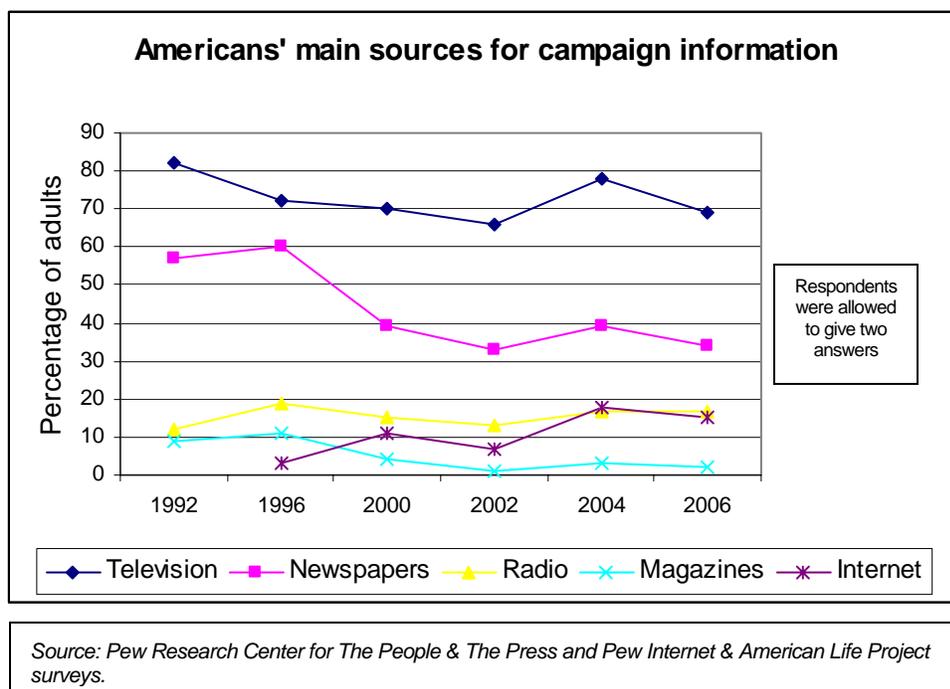
With all that as background, this section of the report will cover the new contours of the online political landscape.

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### Television still wins the political news horserace – by a wide margin.

As it has been for generations, television remains ahead of other media in 2006 as a news source. On any given day when this survey was in the field in November, 61% of all Americans say they watched a television news program, 38% read a daily paper, and 21% got news of any kind online.

When it comes the political news, television's lead over other media is even more pronounced. Fully 69% of all Americans said they went to the television for most of their news about the campaign – twice the proportion of those who cited newspapers (34%), four times the proportion who singled out radio (17%) and the internet (15%).



Even for internet users (not the public as a whole), television and newspapers outpace the internet as a campaign source. Among America's 136 million adult internet users 66% say television was their main source of political news in 2006 and another 31% cite newspapers. That compares with the 22% of internet users who cite the internet itself as their main source of campaign news.

Still, television's lead is slipping and the only notable growth in any political news channel since 1996 has been on the internet. And the most dramatic shift to reliance on the internet has come among those with broadband connections at home.

## Part 2. The Role of the Internet in the 2006 Election Cycle

### 15% of all Americans say the internet was their main source of political news and information in the 2006 campaign – up from 7% who said this in the last mid-term election in 2002.

The proportion of Americans who say the internet was a main source of campaign news and information for them grew fivefold since 1996 and doubled since the last mid-term election in 2002. Some 15% of all Americans – and 22% of internet users – say the internet was the place where they were getting most of their news about the 2006 races. Significantly, for an off-year election, the proportion of Americans relying on the internet this year was close to the 18% of Americans who relied on the internet during the hotly-contested presidential election in 2004.

Among other things this means that the internet now rivals radio as a principal source of political news for all Americans.

For some groups the internet has become a more important source than some traditional news channels. For instance, home broadband users are just as likely to count on the internet as they are for newspapers to get political news. And home broadband users are notably more likely to rely on the internet than on the radio.

<b>Where People Got MOST of their Election News</b>				
<i>(% of all in each group who say they get most election news from specific source)</i>				
	<b>All respondents</b>	<b>Non-internet users</b>	<b>Broadband at home</b>	<b>Dial-up at home</b>
Television	69%	77%	63%	73%
Newspapers	34	41	28	37
Internet	15	*	27	13
Radio	17	16	17	18
Magazines	2	2	2	1
Number of cases	2,562	817	1,154	373

Source: Joint post-election survey by the Pew Internet & American Life Project and the Pew Research Center for The People & The Press. November 2006. N=2,562. Margin of error is ±2%.

For young broadband users (those under age 36) the media use story is even more dramatic. Among them, there is a striking 2-1 lead for the internet over newspapers as a main source for campaign news. For these highly-engaged and wired Americans, use of internet has a replacement effect on other media. In other words, the internet pushes out newspapers and to a lesser extent TV. For older broadband users, the internet plays a

## Part 2. The Role of the Internet in the 2006 Election Cycle

supplementary role and doesn't push out (very much, at least) newspapers or TV as news sources.<sup>6</sup>

Comparative analysis of the 2006 post-election survey and our 2002 post-election survey illuminates to some extent the sources of the increase in reliance on the internet. Growth in broadband adoption had something to do with it; we estimate that higher levels of home high-speed adoption accounts for roughly 30% of the greater reliance on the internet for most campaign news over the 2002 to 2006 timeframe. In other words, the share of people turning to the internet as a main source of mid-term political news doubled in four years and about a third of that growth is due to growth in home broadband adoption.<sup>7</sup>

<b>Where People Got MOST of their Election News: Comparing Age Groups and Connection Speed</b>						
<i>(% of all in each group who say they get most election news from specific source)</i>						
	<b>Under age 36</b>		<b>Between 36 &amp; 50</b>		<b>51 and older</b>	
	<b>Broadband</b>	<b>Dial-up</b>	<b>Broadband</b>	<b>Dial-up</b>	<b>Broadband</b>	<b>Dial-up</b>
Television	57%	71%	65%	76%	73	74
Newspapers	18	28	28	35	45	48
Internet	35	17	22	11	17	10
Radio	17	20	21	16	14	19
Magazines	2	0	2	2	1	2
Number of cases	496	123	368	114	279	132

*Source: Joint post-election survey by the Pew Internet & American Life Project and the Pew Research Center for The People & The Press. November 2006. N=2,562. Margin of error in the overall sample is ±2%.*

Where does the rest of the growth come from? There isn't an entirely clear story here but it is reasonable to speculate that growth in online experience may be part of the answer, as well as improvements and innovations related to the political information that is made available online. Finally, to the extent that people use the internet to dig deeper into news stories of interest to them, greater interest in the 2006 mid-term election relative to 2002 might be behind some of the growth in reliance on the internet for campaign news.

### **31% of Americans – more than 60 million people – used the internet for political purposes in campaign 2006.**

We calculate the overall campaign internet user population by asking several questions about getting news and information on the internet and using email to discuss politics. In

<sup>6</sup> The finding that the internet substitutes for newspapers for young broadband users, but not for older ones, is confirmed by the fact that the nature and direction of the correlation between using the newspaper and using the internet as a source of campaign news varies by age. The strong negative correlation between the two sources for young broadband users suggests a replacement effect, while the lack of a significant correlation among older broadband users supports the "internet as supplement" hypothesis for older broadband users.

<sup>7</sup> This number is derived from a logistic regression model that predicts the likelihood an internet user identified the internet as a "main" source of campaign news, holding constant a variety of demographic characteristics and type of connection speed. Comparing the model's prediction that a person says the internet was a "main" source of campaign news with 2006 and 2002 broadband penetration rates yields the 30% figure for the increase in online news consumption attributable to growth in home high-speed penetration.

## Part 2. The Role of the Internet in the 2006 Election Cycle

all, we calculate that 46% of internet users – or 31% of the entire adult population – used the internet for some kind of political purpose during the last election.

<b>Demographics of the campaign internet user population</b>	
<i>31% of online Americans were active in gathering news or sharing emails about the campaign during the 2006 election cycle.</i>	
	Proportion of all Americans in the group who are in the campaign internet user population
Men	34%
Women	29%
Race/ethnicity	
White, non-Hispanic	33%
Black, non-Hispanic	23%
English-speaking Hispanic*	23%
Other	25%
Age	
18-29	39%
30-49	37%
50-64	28%
65+	13%
Educational attainment	
Less than HS	11%
High school diploma	18%
Some college	34%
College degree +	57%
Household income	
<\$30K	16%
\$30K-\$49,999	32%
\$50K-\$74,999	35%
\$75,000+	54%
Community type	
Rural	26%
Suburban	35%
Urban	34%
Internet connection	
Dial up	34%
Broadband	53%
<i>Source: Joint post-election survey by the Pew Internet &amp; American Life Project and the Pew Research Center for The People &amp; The Press. November 2006. N for campaign internet users 821 in the sample including the cell phone only users (margin of error is ± 3.7%) and 742 for the landline only sample (margin of error is ±4%).</i>	

We used different questions to identify this population this year than were used in previous campaigns so it is not possible to do precise comparisons of this group to online politics consumers in previous elections. But is clear that this group is more diverse than the original online political junkies of 1996. Surveys by the Pew Research Center for The

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People & The Press at the time found the online political class was two-thirds male, disproportionately young, very likely to hold college or graduate degrees, and heavily populated with suburban dwellers.

In 2006 the demographic composition of the group is more like the general population of the country, though it is still not a completely equivalent group. It is still disproportionately composed of those with college degrees and who live in households earning over \$75,000.

<b>The breakdown of the campaign internet user population</b>	
	Proportion of the campaign internet user population that is made up of this group – e.g. 53% of such campaign internet users are men, 47% are women
Men	53%
Women	47%
Race/ethnicity	
White, non-Hispanic	77%
Black, non-Hispanic	8%
English-speaking Hispanic*	7%
Other	8%
Age	
18-29	26%
30-49	45%
50-64	21%
65+	7%
Educational attainment	
Less than HS	4%
High school diploma	20%
Some college	26%
College degree +	49%
Household income	
<\$30K	15%
\$30K-\$49,999	23%
\$50K-\$74,999	18%
\$75,000+	44%
Community type	
Rural	21%
Suburban	53%
Urban	26%
Internet connection	
Dial up	17%
Broadband	83%
<small>Source: Joint post-election survey by the Pew Internet &amp; American Life Project and the Pew Research Center for The People &amp; The Press. November 2006. N for campaign internet users 821 in the sample including the cell phone only users (margin of error is ± 3.7%) and 742 for the landline only sample (margin of error is ±4%).</small>	

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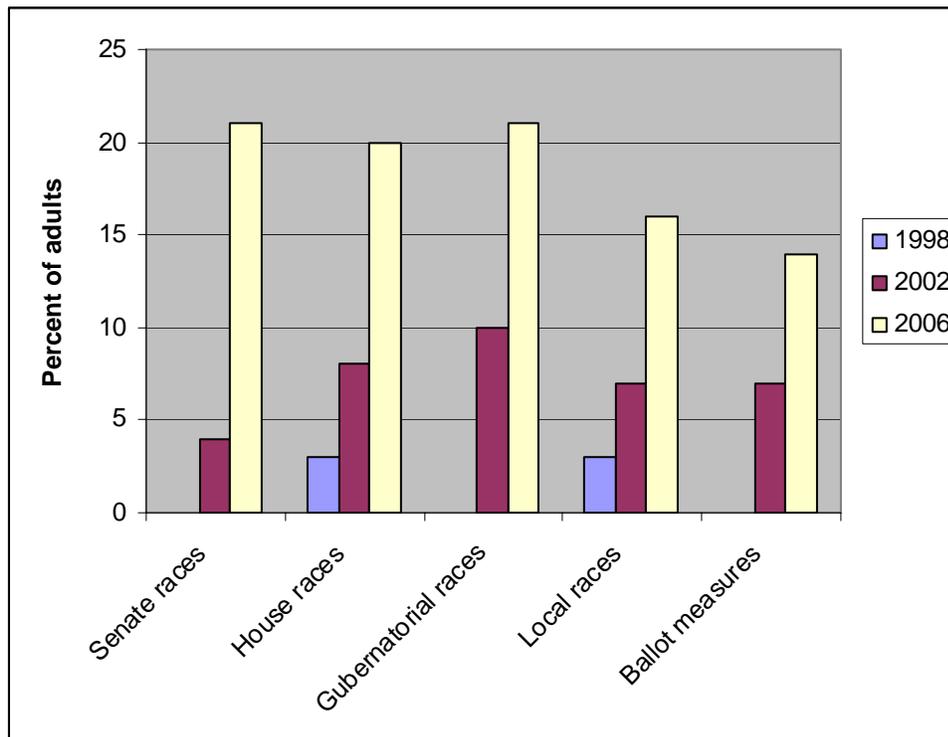
Among other things, this shift in population composition made the online political news consumer population a bit less intense as a group about political news, more likely to cite convenience as a primary reason to get political news online and more likely to visit the sites of traditional news organizations.

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### Campaign internet users cared most about Senate and House races, but interest in all kinds of races has risen since 2002.

The increase in the number of people who use the internet for political purposes is reflected in the number of those getting online news and information about particular kinds of races. The number of Americans getting information about Senate races rose fivefold since 2002, and at least doubled in the case of House races, local contests and gubernatorial campaigns.

Growth in interest in every kind of political contest



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### Campaign internet users cite convenience as the primary factor for their reliance on the internet. However, nearly two-thirds of campaign internet users say they like online news resources because they provide more material than they get from other news media.

For most of those interested in political content and chatter about the campaign, the ease of using the internet was the most compelling reason to use the internet for politics. Fully

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71% of campaign internet users cite convenience as a major reason they use the internet for political activities.

<b>Some use the internet for politics because it is convenient and others use it to get extra news or dig deeper into the news</b>				
<i>Asked of campaign internet users: Please tell me if each of the following is a MAJOR reason you get political and campaign news and information online, a MINOR reason, or not a reason at all for you?</i>				
	<b>Major reason</b>	<b>Minor reason</b>	<b>Not a reason at all</b>	<b>Don't know / refused</b>
Getting information online is convenient	71%	16%	12%	NA
You can get information on the Web that is not available elsewhere	49%	24%	26%	1%
You don't get all the news and information you want from traditional news sources such as the daily newspaper or the network TV news	41%	33%	23%	NA
You can get perspectives from outside your community on candidates and issues	34%	37%	27%	2%
You can get local perspectives online about candidates and issues	28%	35%	35%	2%
<i>Source: Joint post-election survey by the Pew Internet &amp; American Life Project and the Pew Research Center for The People &amp; The Press. November 2006. N for campaign internet users 821 in the sample including the cell phone only users (margin of error is ± 3.7%) and 742 for the landline only sample (margin of error is ±4%).</i>				

At the same time, nearly two-thirds of campaign internet users cite unique features of internet news as a major reason for getting political information online. Some 49% say they appreciated that they get information on the Web that is not available elsewhere and 41% say a major appeal of the internet was that they could not get all the political information they wanted from traditional news sources. Altogether, 65% of campaign internet users cite at least one of those as a major reason.

In addition, we asked new questions this year about other factors that might be driving voter interest in getting political news and information and they further confirm the notion that for some users the internet is force that helps them connect to the world outside their community while others say it connects them more directly to their locale. Some commentators have called this “glocalization” and it shows up in our survey this way: A third of campaign internet users (34%) say a major reason to get news online was to get perspectives from outside their communities and 28% say getting local perspectives was a major reason. A significant number (22% of campaign internet users) cite both reasons for their use of the internet.

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**Mainstream news sources dominated the online news and information gathering by campaign internet users. At the same time, blogs, comedy sites, government websites, candidate sites, and alternative news sites were a part of the information mix for many.**

Asked where they went online to get news and information about the campaign, the greatest number of campaign internet users cite traditional news organizations or online

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services that syndicate news from traditional sources, such as wire services. However, more than half of campaign internet users (53%) go to Web sources beyond those that are fed by traditional news media in the United States – that is, they got political news from sites such as alternative news sites, international news sites, blogs, comedy sites, local and state government sites, candidate sites, and email listservs.

Here is how the Web traffic broke down for the 31% of Americans (more than 60 million) who are in the campaign internet user population:

- 60% got news and information about the campaign from **news portals** such as Google News or Yahoo! News. This is the first post-election survey in which we have framed the question this way and it is striking to note that these services were especially popular with younger internet users (those age 18-29 years old) overall and even more so with civically-engaged young users, particularly those who follow political news closely.
- 60% got news and information about the campaign from **TV network websites** such as CNN.com or ABCNews.com. These kinds of sites were particularly compelling to campaign internet users between ages 30-49 and those who have broadband connections at work, presumably because a portion of campaign internet users were checking in with their favorite sites during the day on the job.
- 48% got news and information about the campaign from **local news organization websites**. Again, these kinds of traditional news organization websites were particularly appealing to those age 30-49 years old. These sites were also especially important to those who say they liked the internet because it gave them news and information with local perspective.
- 31% got news and information about the campaign from **websites of major national newspapers** such as *USA Today* or the *New York Times*. These sites are especially popular with those who have higher levels of education and with those who have broadband connections at work. These sites were also especially important to those who say the internet gave them access to non-local perspectives on politics.
- 28% got news and information about the campaign from the **websites of state or local governments**. There were no notable demographic traits that characterized the campaign internet users of these sites. They were evenly spread among all ages, races, and socio-economic classes. However, these sites had special appeal to campaign internet users who go online in hopes of getting extra local perspective on politics.
- 24% got news and information about the campaign from **issue-oriented websites**. Internet users with relatively high levels of education were drawn to these sites. These sites particularly appealed to women in the campaign internet user population. They also were attractive to those who do not feel that traditional news sources like television and newspapers give them all the information they seek and to those who are looking for perspective from non-local sources.

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- 20% got news and information about the campaign from **blogs**. Those with relatively high levels of education and high levels of household income were particularly drawn to blogs as were campaign internet users in their 30s and their 50s. Blogs held special force with those who used the internet to get political news and information from places outside their communities.
- 20% got news and information about the campaign from **international news organization websites**, such as the BBC or Al Jazeera. Online men were more likely than women to be drawn to such sites, as were younger campaign internet users. They also were a favorite destination of people who wanted perspective from outside their community and also those who felt the internet gives them information beyond what is available from traditional news sources.
- 20% got news and information about the campaign from **websites created by candidates**. These sites were disproportionately used by civically-engaged young voters and voters who felt that the internet is a good source of information that is unavailable elsewhere. They were also important to people who see the internet as a place to get local perspectives.
- 19% got news and information about the campaign from **news satire websites** like *The Onion* or *The Daily Show*. These sites drew a lot of traffic from younger users (those under age 30). Some 30% of campaign internet users under age 30 went to such sites. Further, these sites were appealing to those who felt the internet gives them political information that is not available elsewhere.
- 19% got news and information about the campaign from the **websites of radio news organizations**, such as National Public Radio. Such sites are particularly appealing to those with higher levels of education.
- 10% got news and information about the campaign from **websites of alternative news organizations**, such as Alternet.org or NewsMax.com. Not surprisingly, these sites were especially popular to those who liked the internet for giving them information not available in traditional news sources like television and newspapers.
- 10% got news and information about the campaign from **email listservs**. Interesting, listservs were seen as a good source of political information from places outside a person's local community.

We recast many of these questions from previous surveys so in those cases it is not possible to do detailed election-to-election comparisons. Still, there is notable growth in some of the general categories between the two elections. For instance: The percent of all Americans who used the websites of local news organizations in 2002 was 4% and this year amounted to 11% of the entire population; the percent of the entire population using issue-oriented websites in 2002 was 2% and in this cycle was 8%; the percent of the full population using candidate sites in 2002 was 2%, compared with 6% this election.

## Part 2. The Role of the Internet in the 2006 Election Cycle

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### **Campaign internet users took advantage of online political resources in many ways, but most commonly checked candidates' positions on the issues.**

The internet has made it easy for citizens to engage in politics online. Here is a rundown of some of the activities that they performed:

- 52% of campaign internet users looked for information about candidates' positions on the issues or voting records – that amounts to 20% of all Americans who used the internet this way.
- 41% of campaign internet users checked online about the accuracy of claims made by or about the candidates – that amounts to 14% of all Americans who used the internet this way.
- 32% of campaign internet users watched video clips about the candidates or the election online – that amounts to 13% of all Americans who used the internet this way.
- 27% of campaign internet users searched online for candidate endorsements or ratings by outside organizations – that amounts to 9% of all Americans who used the internet this way.
- 9% of campaign internet users signed up to receive emails from candidates or campaigns – that amounts to 3% of all Americans who used the internet this way.
- 5% of campaign internet users contributed money to a candidate – that comes to 3% of all Americans who gave money online to a candidate.

For all of these items, several demographic and technological realities stand out. Those doing these activities are significantly more likely than others to have a broadband connection at home, a college education, live in a household with relatively high income, and be under age 40.

In addition, online men are more likely than women to check on claims about and endorsements of candidates, and watch videos.

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### **A new class of online political activist is emerging online; 23% of campaign internet users are in this new political elite.**

The campaign of 2006 marked an important breakthrough moment for online video and politics – especially citizen-created or shared video. Virginia Sen. George Allen's campaign went into a tailspin after he addressed a videographer from rival James Webb's campaign as "Macaca," a term some considered derogatory and racist. Similarly, video of Montana Sen. Conrad Burns dozing off during Senate business was viewed and widely debated by his constituents. And Rep. Sue Kelly of New York was captured on video fleeing reporters rather than answer their questions about her views on Mark Foley's activities with congressional pages. All three lost their races.

## Part 2. The Role of the Internet in the 2006 Election Cycle

Some 21% of campaign internet users (or 13% of the entire adult population) viewed videos online about the campaign. That is the same proportion of Americans who viewed online video in the 2004 presidential election race and is an illustration of how Americans who have brought broadband connections into their homes have added to their political information resources.

Moreover, in this survey we asked several questions of campaign internet users about creating and sharing political content and found:

- 8% of campaign internet users posted their own political commentary to a newsgroup, website or blog.
- 13% of them forwarded or posted someone else's political commentary.
- 1% of them created political audio or video recordings.
- 8% of them forwarded or posted someone else's political audio or video recordings.

Altogether, 23% of campaign internet users (or 11% of internet users and 7% of the entire U.S. population) had done at least one of those things. That translates into about 14 million people.

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### **The online political activist cohort is socially upscale and tech-embracing.**

This is a population disproportionately weighted towards the young, the relatively well-educated and the well-to-do. And, most notably, it is a group dominated by those who have broadband connections at home.

In their partisanship and ideology, online political activists mirror the general population of those who are civically active. However, liberals are more likely to be online political activists than conservatives. Some 15% of internet users who describe themselves as liberals are such online activists, compared with 9% of online conservatives. Online political activists as a group are evenly divided between men and women. And their racial and ethnic composition is not very different from the general population.

Online political activists are highly active and engaged citizens, not only on the internet, but in civic life in general.

Compared with many of their fellow citizens, online political activists report higher levels of interest in public life. They are heavy consumers of news in all forms. In the most recent campaign they were more likely to cite the internet as the main source of their political news than newspapers, although they were most likely to say television was their main source of political news.

They also exhibit the most aggressive use of the internet to do all kinds of political activity, from exchanging emails about the campaign, to signing up for email alerts from campaigns, to getting political news from websites outside the mainstream media, to

## Part 2. The Role of the Internet in the 2006 Election Cycle

watching video clips and assessing candidate claims and counterclaims, to donating to candidates.

<b>The demographics of online political activists</b>	
The percentage of the online political activist class made up by each group	
Men	51%
Women	49%
<b>Ideology</b>	
Liberal	19%
Conservative	39%
Moderate	42%
<b>Partisanship</b>	
Republican	31%
Democrat	34%
Independent	35%
<b>Race/ethnicity</b>	
White, non-Hispanic	79%
Black, non-Hispanic	10%
English-speaking Hispanic	9%
Other	2%
<b>Age</b>	
18-29	29%
30-49	39%
50-64	21%
65+	11%
<b>Educational attainment</b>	
High school diploma or less	21%
Some college	25%
College or grad school degree	56%
<b>Household income</b>	
Less than \$30,000	20%
\$30,000-\$50,000	26%
\$50,000-\$75,000	16%
\$50,000 or more	39%
<b>Internet connection type</b>	
Dial-up	19%
Broadband	81%
Source: Joint post-election survey by the Pew Internet & American Life Project and the Pew Research Center for The People & The Press. November 2006. N for campaign internet users=192. Margin of error is ±8%.	

Online political activists also have different information-seeking habits online. They are more likely than others to prefer going to websites that share their point of view. And they are more likely than other internet users to go to websites that are not principally fed by American news organizations.

They are also the most likely group to say that their major reasons for using the internet to get political information include getting extra information and more perspective – both in terms of local perspective and insight from beyond their community.

## Part 2. The Role of the Internet in the 2006 Election Cycle

The table below highlights their special brand of activism and interest in political news from all kinds of places on the internet:

<b>New rules of engagement</b>				
<i>The percent who say or do the following things</i>				
Activity, belief, or behavior	All 2006 voters	All internet users	Campaign internet users	Online political activists
<b>Interest in public affairs and news</b>				
Follow what's going on in public affairs most of the time	57%	47%	59%	74%
Read newspaper "yesterday"	46%	38%	43%	47%
Watched TV news program "yesterday"	67%	62%	65%	72%
Got online news "yesterday"	54%	31%	68%	68%
<b>Media that was their main source of 2006 campaign news</b>				
Television	72%	66%	59%	57%
Newspapers	41%	31%	27%	30%
Internet	16%	22%	49%	43%
<b>Political activity online</b>				
Look for information about candidate positions	NA	29%	52%	64%
Send or receive email about candidates	NA	15%	33%	56%
Check accuracy of claims made by/about candidates	NA	21%	41%	52%
Watch video clips about campaign	NA	19%	32%	44%
Look for candidate endorsements or ratings	NA	14%	27%	37%
Sign up for campaign emails	NA	5%	9%	36%
Contribute online to a campaign	NA	3%	5%	9%
<b>Online news sources used</b>				
Websites of state / local government	NA	NA	28%	34%
Issue-oriented websites	NA	NA	24%	38%
Blogs / online journals	NA	NA	20%	33%
Candidate websites	NA	NA	20%	27%
Websites of international news organizations	NA	NA	20%	28%
Humor websites like The Onion, Daily Show	NA	NA	19%	27%
Email listservs	NA	NA	10%	19%
Alternative news websites	NA	NA	10%	17%
<b>The partisan leanings of the sites they use</b>				
Have no point of view	NA	NA	34%	24%
Share my point of view	NA	NA	28%	40%
Challenge my point of view	NA	NA	20%	24%
<b>Major reasons they get political news online</b>				
It is convenient	NA	NA	71%	73%
Get information not available elsewhere	NA	NA	49%	58%
Don't get all the political news you want from traditional news media	NA	NA	41%	52%
Get perspectives from outside your community	NA	NA	34%	51%
Get local perspectives	NA	NA	28%	36%
Number of cases	1,673	1,578	821	192
<i>Source: Joint post-election survey by the Pew Internet &amp; American Life Project and the Pew Research Center for The People &amp; The Press. November 2006. N for campaign internet users 821 in the sample including the cell phone only users (margin of error is ± 3.7%) and 742 for the landline only sample (margin of error is ±4%).</i>				

## Part 2. The Role of the Internet in the 2006 Election Cycle

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### **Internet users often bump into political news when they were doing other things online.**

One of the realities of life online is that an internet user can encounter material through links or through general browsing that is often not related to the subject that inspired them to go online in the first place. For instance, they might go online to check sports scores or use a search engine and still run into political information that is also displayed on pages linked the ones they are using.

We have seen consistent evidence of this and the post-election survey adds more data. Some 36% of internet users (24% of the general population) say they ran across campaign news and information on the internet while they were online for another purpose. These happenstance encounters with political material were somewhat less frequent than in the 2004 election when 51% of internet users (and 31% of the general population) had this occur to them.

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### **Voters aren't always looking for information that supports their point of view. Many seek contrary material.**

One of the major concerns about people's use of the internet is that they might use the powerful filtering mechanisms available online and begin to shun information that does not agree with their beliefs. The Pew Internet Project studied the phenomenon of "selective exposure" in a report in 2004, which found that it does not appear to be a typical pattern of internet users.<sup>8</sup> This new survey provides additional support for the idea that internet users are likely to encounter information that challenges their point of view.

Asked about the websites they regularly visit, a slight plurality of internet users say they prefer neutral sources; the remainder divided between their preferences for going to sites that agreed with their political views and sites that challenged their political views:

- 34% of campaign internet users say most of the sites they use sites that don't have a particular point of view
- 28% of campaign internet users say most of the sites they use share their point of view
- 20% of campaign internet users say most of the sites they use sites that challenge their point of view
- 18% of campaign internet users did not respond to this question or say they didn't know.

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<sup>8</sup> For more details, please see "The Internet and Democratic Debate" available at [http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/141/report\\_display.asp](http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/141/report_display.asp)

## Part 3.

### Republicans, Democrats and the Internet

**Use of the internet for politics did not give particular advantage to either party. Still, online political activists favored Democratic candidates.**

Republican and Democratic voters were equally likely to say that the internet was their main source of election news (17% among each group). In contrast, there were notable differences between Republican and Democratic voters in their preferences for other news sources. For instance, Democratic voters were more likely to cite newspapers and certain broadcast and cable news operations as their main sources of news, while Republican voters favored the Fox cable TV News and radio.

<b>Media choices of Republican and Democratic Voters</b>		
<i>Asked of adults: How have you been getting most of your news about the November elections?</i>		
	<b>Main source of news</b>	
	<i>Voted Republican</i>	<i>Voted Democratic</i>
All forms of TV	69%	74%
<b>Fox Cable</b>	<b>24%**</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Local news</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>ABC Network</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>NBC Network</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>14%*</b>
<b>CNN Cable</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>17%*</b>
<b>CBS Network</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>11%*</b>
<b>MSNBC Cable</b>	<b>3%</b>	<b>6%*</b>
Newspapers	38%	44%*
Radio	21%**	14%
Internet	17%	17%
Magazines	2%	2%

\* Statistically significant difference for Democrats compared with Republicans.  
 \*\* Statistically significant difference for Republicans compared with Democrats.  
 Source: Joint post-election survey by the Pew Internet & American Life Project and the Pew Research Center for The People & The Press. November 2006. N=2,562. Margin of error is ±2%.

Put differently, the internet news audience for the 2006 race was no different in its vote preferences than the public as a whole. Among all voters, 45% voted Democratic and 35% voted Republican; among those who relied upon the internet for election news, 43% voted Democratic and 35% voted Republican.

### Part 3. Republicans, Democrats and the Internet

Among all internet users: 44% voted for Democratic congressional candidates and 36% voted for Republicans, Non-internet users, who tend to be older and poorer, were considerably more likely than the internet users to vote Democratic. And among campaign internet users (those who used the internet to get political news and information related to the 2006 race) the same bipartisan phenomenon holds: 41% of campaign internet users voted for Republican candidates for Congress and 36% of campaign internet users voted for Democrats.

The one meaningful distinction emerged among online political activists. They had a statistically meaningful preference for Democratic candidates: 52% of those activists voted for the Democratic candidates, while 35% voted for Republicans. This might stem from the more liberal intensity of political content creators and sharers, though liberals are not the dominant ideological group among political content creators.

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#### **Liberal Democrats were particularly drawn to some online political activities.**

Liberal Democrats are sometimes the most interested in online political news and information and who are the most active in pursuing political activities on the internet. The number of cases in the sample of campaign internet users is too small for much analysis. For instance, there were 82 people in the campaign internet user group who said they were moderate or liberal Republicans and 102 who said they were liberal Democrats.

Still, there were some clear differences that applied to liberal Democrats. Among ideological groups, liberal Democrats were the most likely to be online political activists, to get political material from blogs, international news organizations, email listservs and humor or satire sites.

Liberal Democrats were also the most likely to say they sought out political websites that agreed with their point of view. And they were the least likely group to say that they used political websites that disagreed with their point of view.

# Methodology

This report is based on the findings of a daily tracking survey on Americans' use of the Internet. The results in this report are based on data from telephone interviews conducted by Princeton Survey Research Associates International between November 8 to December 4, 2006, among a sample of 2,562 adults, 18 and older. For results based on the total sample, one can say with 95% confidence that the error attributable to sampling is plus or minus 2.1 percentage points. For results based Internet users (n=1,727), the margin of sampling error is plus or minus 2.6 percentage points. In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting telephone surveys may introduce some error or bias into the findings of opinion polls.

This survey also reflects a new reality for doing national phone sampling in 2006. A notable number of Americans now do not have landline telephones and can only be contacted for surveys through their cell phones. National household surveys taken in 2005 and 2006 found that 7%-9% of Americans were reachable only by cell phone, a number that was perhaps twice as high for younger people. The Pew Research Center now estimates that 10% of Americans are reachable only by cell phone. To try to account for this phenomenon, we conducted 200 interviews by phone with cell-only users. This addition makes our sample more representative of the national population.

The survey given to the cell-only users was about half the length of the survey given to landline users, so some of the analysis in this report includes material from the cell-only population and some of the analysis only involves those contacted through landlines.

There were two different samples for this survey. One was a random digit dial landline sample of telephone numbers selected from telephone exchanges in the continental United States. The random digit aspect of the sample is used to avoid "listing" bias and provides representation of both listed and unlisted numbers (including not-yet-listed numbers). The design of the sample achieves this representation by random generation of the last two digits of telephone numbers selected on the basis of their area code, telephone exchange, and bank number. A total of 2,362 interviews were obtained from the landline sample.

An additional 200 interviews were conducted with cell phone users who do not have access to a landline at their residence. The cell phone sample was drawn from 1000-blocks that have been allocated to one or more wireless service providers according to the most recent Telcordia TMP data file. The file is stratified by FIPS code, carrier name and 1000-block in an attempt to get a sample that is representative both geographically and by carrier. From a random start within the first sampling interval, systematic selections of 1000-blocks are performed and 3-digit random numbers are appended to each 1000-block stem to complete phone numbers. Survey Sampling Inc., the firm that developed this sample, did not screen the sample for disconnects or business numbers since that would violate TCPA rules prohibiting the automated dialing of wireless numbers. Only

## Methodology

people contacted from the cell phone sample who did not use a landline were included in the survey. Those with access to a landline were screened out.

New sample was released daily and was kept in the field for at least five days for the RDD sample. The sample was released in replicates, which are representative subsamples of the larger population. This ensures that complete call procedures were followed for the entire sample. At least 10 attempts were made to complete an interview at sampled phone numbers. The calls were staggered over times of day and days of the week to maximize the chances of making contact with a potential respondent. Each household received at least one daytime call in an attempt to find someone at home. In each landline contacted household, interviewers asked to speak with the youngest male currently at home. If no male was available, interviewers asked to speak with the youngest female at home. This systematic respondent selection technique has been shown to produce samples that closely mirror the population in terms of age and gender. All interviews completed on any given day were considered to be the final sample for that day.

For the cell phone sample, interviewers attempted to conduct an interview with the person who answered the phone once they confirmed that the respondent was not driving or doing anything else that might be dangerous. Interviewers also confirmed that the person was at least 18 years old. Only respondents who identified their cell phone as their only phone continued with the main interview. Those who also had access to a landline at their residence were screened out of the survey as ineligible. To encourage participation, an incentive of \$10 was offered to each eligible respondent who completed the interview. The CPO questionnaire contained a subset of questions from the original landline Post-Election November Tracking Survey.

Non-response in telephone interviews produces some known biases in survey-derived estimates because participation tends to vary for different subgroups of the population, and these subgroups are likely to vary also on questions of substantive interest. In order to compensate for these known biases, the sample data are weighted in analysis. The demographic weighting parameters are derived from a special analysis of the most recently available Census Bureau's March 2005 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. This analysis produces population parameters for the demographic characteristics of adults age 18 or older, living in households that contain a telephone.<sup>9</sup> These parameters are then compared with the sample characteristics to construct sample weights. The weights are derived using an iterative technique that simultaneously balances the distribution of all weighting parameters.

Following is the full disposition of all sampled telephone numbers:

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<sup>9</sup> The weighting parameters for this survey were the same as parameters for past PIAL Tracking survey. We did add one additional parameter so that our final weighted sample was approximately 10 percent CPO households.

**Table 1: Sample Disposition**

Total Numbers dialed	27,992	
Business	1,559	
Computer/Fax	1,260	
Other Not-Working	10,000	
Working numbers	15,173	54.2%
No Answer	490	
Busy	220	
Answering		
Machine/Voicemail	2,783	
Callbacks	329	
Other Non-Contacts	1,606	
Contacted numbers	9,745	64.2%
Initial Refusals	4,010	
Second Refusals	1,579	
Cooperating numbers	4,156	42.6%
No Adult in HH	55	
Not Cell Phone Only	896	
Language Barrier	475	
Eligible numbers	2,730	65.7%
Interrupted	168	
Completes	2,562	93.8%
	Response Rate	25.7%

PSRAI calculates a response rate as the product of three individual rates: the contact rate, the cooperation rate, and the completion rate. Of the phone numbers in the sample, 64 percent were contacted by an interviewer and 43 percent agreed to participate in the survey. Sixty-six percent were found eligible for the interview. Furthermore, 94 percent of eligible respondents completed the interview. Therefore, the final response rate is 26 percent.

Another change we have made in this analysis is that we often report our findings by citing the percentage of the overall American adult population (those age 18 and older) who have done something online or believe something. In the past we have sometimes cited the millions of Americans who have done political activities online. We feel that while it is possible to estimate the actual number of Americans who are doing certain things online, it is a bit more useful and practical to cite the percentage.